

OS. 104



# British Birds

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Rare breeding birds  
in the UK in 2010

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# British Birds

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# British Birds

Volume 105 • Number 7 • July 2012

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*Mark Holling and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel*

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# Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2010

Mark Holling and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

Alan Harris



Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

## Review of the year 2010

This, the 37th report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), includes details of 94 species or distinctive races that bred (or showed signs of breeding) in the UK in 2010, which turned out to be a particularly good year for rare breeding birds. That total is eight more than in 2009, although five new species (Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*, Long-eared Owl *Asio otis*, Short-eared Owl *A. flammeus*, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* and Willow Tit *Poecile montana*) were added to the RBBP list with effect from the 2010 season ([www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-list-full](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-species-list-full)). Two species are new to these reports (Great White Egret *Ardea alba* and Long-tailed Skua *S. longicaudus*) and a further eight had not been reported in 2009: Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli*, Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*, Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans*, Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

and Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*. A further five potential breeding species are listed in Appendix 1.

For species resident in the UK, the harsh 2009/10 winter, with prolonged periods of snowfall and sub-zero temperatures, was a testing precursor to the 2010 season. However, most of the breeding season was characterised by settled weather, especially from mid May to the end of June, which meant that weather-related disruption to breeding birds was minimised. The third spring and summer of fieldwork for Bird Atlas 2007–11 helped to boost the numbers of some species recorded and most notably Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*.

In each RBBP report we select a number of species for a more thorough analysis and here we consider three species which are not only very rare but seem to be in long-term decline: Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* and Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*.

Two pairs of Pink-footed Geese bred, with



broods fledging in Cumbria and Highland, the first documented breeding of apparently wild Pink-footed Geese in the UK. Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, one of our rarest ducks, was surveyed more thoroughly in 2010, partly as a response to the declines reported in the last national census, in 2007, and up to 42 pairs were located. A pair of Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula* nested in Northumberland for the first time and reared up to eight young. A winter count of Capercaillies *Tetrao urogallus* found that the total number of individuals had declined by 35% since the previous count, in 2003/04, to 1,285 individuals. A male Macaronesian Shearwater was heard calling from a burrow on Lundy, Devon, recalling a similar event in Wales in the early 1980s.

Despite the cold winter, the number of booming Eurasian Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* increased once more, to over 100, while the number of pairs of Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* reached the 800 mark for the second year in a row. Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* first nested in 2008, but have yet to establish a real foothold in the UK, and there was no confirmed breeding in 2010. In contrast, after a near-miss in Suffolk in 2007, Purple Herons nested in the UK for the first time, fledging two young in Kent, while Little Bitterns *Ixobrychus minutus* nested for only the second time and two potential breeding pairs of Great White Egrets were present. In the wake of just four confirmed breeding records of Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* since the first modern record in 1998, all of single pairs, it was a surprise to find a colony established in 2010, from which six pairs successfully fledged a total of ten young.

Although the populations of many raptors continue to increase as they recover from historical persecution and the effects of persistent pesticides, some are still being held back by continued illegal killing and nest destruction. Three species stand out: Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* and Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*. The impact of persecution is most noticeable in some parts of the species' ranges, as identified in recent analyses on Golden Eagle (Whitfield *et al.* 2008) and Hen Harrier (Fielding *et al.* 2011). The national survey of Hen Harriers in 2010, the results of

which are summarised in this report, shows that the UK population has declined by 18% since 2004 and the risk of extinction in England is now very real.

This is the first RBBP report to include the Arctic Skua; although data submissions were necessarily limited, with just 557 apparently occupied territories, it is abundantly clear that this species has declined considerably since the Seabird 2000 survey (Mitchell *et al.* 2004; Eaton *et al.* 2009). A long-staying Long-tailed Skua in Shetland was a spectacular bird, but it failed to attract a mate. We report even higher numbers of nesting Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* almost every year it seems but in 2010 this species passed a significant new milestone with over 1,000 pairs nesting, a 44% increase over 2009.

Owing to a lack of a national overview of the numbers of both Long-eared and Short-eared Owls, and a belief that their populations were below the RBBP threshold for inclusion, these species were added to the Panel list with effect from 2010. Fewer than 250 confirmed breeding pairs of each were reported, which is clearly well below the actual population, but we have made a valuable step towards better recording. Similarly, we now have an initial understanding of the numbers regularly reported to county recorders of the remaining new species, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Willow Tit. We hope that summaries on an annual basis will highlight the profile of all these species and emphasise the need for improved recording to aid conservation measures.

The decline of the UK Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* population reached a new nadir in 2010, with no pairs confirmed breeding. The outlook for Red-backed Shrike may be a little brighter, however, with three breeding pairs and the first recorded breeding in England since 1992. Breeding numbers of both Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* and Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* rose to new record heights in 2010, and there is good reason to suggest that there are now more than 1,000 breeding pairs of Firecrests, despite the recent run of cold winters. In contrast, there are some indications of weather-related declines of Woodlark *Lullula arborea*, Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, and

perhaps also Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*.

Several rare warblers, normally found to the south or east of Britain, held territory in 2010: Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*, Marmora's Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*, Melodious Warbler and Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*. None showed any further signs of breeding, but good numbers of both Savi's *L. luscinoides* and Marsh Warbler *A. palustris* (up to ten and nine pairs respectively) was also encouraging, and might suggest that weather conditions in 2010 were conducive to spring overshooting. A wider-than-usual spread of Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* included a breeding pair in Wales and what seems likely to have been a breeding record for Scotland. The presence of up to 20 pairs in Greater London underlines that a significant population remains in the capital. Pure pairs of both Blue-headed *Motacilla flava flava* and White Wagtails *M. alba alba* bred, at opposite ends of the UK.

### The 2010 report and some future developments

Given the large volume of data summarised in it, we are delighted that this report appears in midsummer just two years after the breeding season to which it refers. This timescale has been possible only with the support of everyone who submits data to the Panel, in particular the county bird recorders. We recognise that reviewing all records of RBBP species and compiling an accurate summary of records for each site is a major undertaking for many counties.

The next 12 months will see some exciting new developments for the RBBP. A new database will give us much more flexibility and will also link directly to mapping software to aid our checking and analysis. We shall then be in a much stronger position to produce definitive numbers of each species for all years since 1973, by updating the published figures. In turn, this will provide more information on the history and status of the UK's rare breeding birds on the RBBP website and will support detailed species reviews such as those already published for Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* (Martin & Smith 2007) and Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

(Stroud *et al.* 2012).

Part of the transition to a new database will involve a thorough review of the information held in the existing database. The next 12 months would therefore be a particularly useful time to receive any records that, for whatever reason, have not been submitted to RBBP. We are interested in records of any of the species on our list exhibiting breeding behaviour in any year since 1973. Please contact Mark Holling to check whether the data you have for a particular species in a particular year are held in our archives.

The transition to a new database will run in parallel with the collation and analysis of 2011 submissions, which will have a small impact on the reporting timetable. County recorders, organisations and individuals should aim to submit data for 2011 no later than 31st December 2012 and we intend that the 2011 report will be published in autumn 2013. The next non-native report (that for 2009–11) will follow closely behind. Thereafter, we aim to resume the schedule of publishing annual reports in the summer months, two years after the breeding season concerned.

### Bird Atlas 2007–11

From the earliest stages of the BTO/Bird-Watch Ireland/SOC Bird Atlas 2007–11 project, the RBBP has worked closely with the BTO over rare breeding birds. This has resulted in a policy on confidentiality of records of rare breeding birds ([www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdatlas/taking-part/btos-rare-species-policy](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdatlas/taking-part/btos-rare-species-policy)). Panel members have also reviewed the draft maps of RBBP species to identify gaps in coverage and potential sensitivities, and to advise on the most appropriate mapping resolution in the published Atlas. Issues such as species sensitivity, the sites involved and known threats were all considered fully.

From the initially conservative policy of 100-km-square resolution for online mapping, it has been possible to relax the criteria for final publication. Consequently, many species considered by RBBP will be mapped at 10-km-square resolution. A good example is the Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, provisionally mapped at 20-km resolution in the 2008 RBBP report (Holling *et al.*



2010); now, with a total of over 500 occupied 10-km squares in Britain, this species can be mapped at 10-km resolution with minimal risk. A number of rarer species will be mapped at 20-km or 50-km resolution to convey broad distribution patterns without revealing particular locations.

Underpinning this collaboration has been reciprocal data sharing between the Atlas and RBBP datasets. This has ensured that the RBBP archives benefit from the extensive coverage the Atlas has achieved, while the data underlying the Atlas maps also include the current state of knowledge hitherto available only in the RBBP files. It must be stressed that data provided by RBBP were made available only at 10-km resolution and are held with a number of other confidential sources in a separate, secure system at the BTO. These data are for the sole purpose of Atlas production and analysis and will remain confidential until they are deemed no longer sensitive by RBBP. Anyone requesting access to the Bird Atlas dataset for these species will have to approach RBBP (and other providers of confidential data) directly for high-resolution material, to which the usual RBBP policies will apply. This collaborative process has set new standards in appropriate and secure data sharing, which can only benefit the conservation of rare breeding birds.

### Data sources

Records are collated from all counties of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and the Isle of Man, but not from the Channel Islands. Much of the data are submitted by recorders but other sources include Schedule 1 licence holders, Raptor Study Groups, national surveys, counts from RSPB reserves, and other single-species studies (see Acknowledgments for details). The number of contributing recording areas was similar to that in 2009: 66 full returns supplemented by extracts from six bird reports (66 and five, respectively, in 2009). Most recording areas supplied grid-reference data and also made use of the new RBBP recording spreadsheet for county recorders, available from our website. The use of this spreadsheet simplifies the process of both checking original submissions and uploading records into our database.

We welcome Essex, Clyde Islands, Gwent and Radnorshire back into the fold in 2010 but it was disappointing to receive no data from Carmarthenshire, Herefordshire and West Midlands, all of which supplied data for 2009. In addition, there was again no data from Caithness and Montgomeryshire but correspondence with new county recorders in these areas brings fresh hope for the future. For the missing Welsh counties, some information was extracted from the 'Welsh Bird Report' (Pritchard 2011).

Raptor monitoring in many parts of the UK is achieved largely by the work of the various Raptor Study Groups (RSGs). In Scotland, these groups provided area totals, via the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme, although some of these data cannot always be matched with the bird recording areas used in this report. In much of northern England, mainly upland raptors are monitored by an array of groups operating under the Northern England Raptor Forum (NERF). Schedule 1 raptor data from Wales were collated for RBBP by RSPB Wales under contract from the Countryside Council for Wales. Only limited data on raptors were available from the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group.

Since the annual RBBP reports represent an important source of information for conservation bodies, we strive to maximise coverage across the UK. Consequently, any late submissions are both welcome and important; such records will be added to our archives to ensure that annual statistics and the inventory of breeding sites are updated. For instance, there were a number of changes to the published totals for some raptors in 2009. These and other amendments to published reports are made available on the RBBP website ([www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-reports](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-reports)) and in the course of the last year we have provided such updates to the published reports for 2005–09.

### Record submission: guidelines and standards

Guidelines on data submission are available on the RBBP website. Records should be submitted by the end of each calendar year, for the *previous* year's breeding season. The website also includes the evaluation criteria

for records contained in these reports; these have not changed in recent years. Following the recommendations and guidelines introduced in 2009 (see [www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-recording-standards](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-recording-standards)), the improvement in the quality of information submitted has continued, most notably in the provision of six-figure grid references and the reporting of negative records (distinguishing sites surveyed with no birds found from sites not visited). This is extremely welcome, but we should like to re-emphasise the importance of accuracy of any grid references supplied. Not only does this maintain the high standard of the archive but it is essential in the identification of duplicate records. Some records (not from county recorders), presumably in the interests of confidentiality, are supplied with a variance from the grid reference given (e.g.  $\pm 10$  km), which may mean the location cannot even be placed in a county, and certainly cannot be distinguished from other records of the species in the area. These records cannot be used by RBBP, which is a great shame given the time and effort the observer must have put into the fieldwork!

Stroud *et al.* (2012) identified a number of potential improvements to the recording of rare breeding birds (see *Brit. Birds* 105: 217–218), and we recommend that everyone who finds a rare breeding bird should read these pages. In particular, the use of standard recording criteria by observers and county recorders is important and we intend to continue to publish species-specific guidelines on our website to help. However, a key area for improvement, which will affect some species more than others, is to ensure that all sightings are submitted to a recording scheme. The core of the RBBP archive has been submitted by county recorders, but they depend on receiving the original records in the first place.

Thus finders of rare breeding birds should ensure that their records are supplied promptly to county/regional bird recorders, either directly or via BirdTrack. BirdTrack has been developed to facilitate the collection of bird data and has safeguards in place to maintain confidentiality. Recent enhancements to this online software allow observers to add details of breeding evidence, and to pinpoint the location of a sighting using

online maps. There is scope to add further details and for a rare breeding bird record this could include the observer effort (such as area surveyed, times and dates of visits, negative records). Some county recorders include notes about recording effort in their annual submissions – this is extremely helpful and we encourage it wherever possible.

### Conservation and other uses of RBBP data

It is RBBP policy to make data available for relevant conservation uses, with appropriate controls. Site-specific information is used by JNCC and the country conservation agencies, and national datasets by the RSPB and BTO for survey and conservation planning. Over the last 12 months, RBBP data have continued to support the review of the UK's Special Protection Area network and helped the planning of the 2012 survey of Spotted Crakes. The involvement of RBBP and its data with Bird Atlas 2007–11 is discussed above. Statistics on species covered by the RBBP will also be included in the calculation of a new, all-taxa Priority Species Indicator. In a review of the importance of nature reserves by a research student and RSPB, the occurrence of selected rare breeding species in the reserve network has also begun, using RBBP data. Corn Crake *Crex crex* data from earlier years were used by the RSPB to analyse the results of the 2009 survey, while separate analyses by private researchers concerning Greenshanks, Black Redstarts in London and the county of Montgomeryshire have been carried out using records from our database.

Anyone who is interested in performing status reviews on RBBP species is invited to prepare a proposal and submit it for consideration. We are particularly keen to encourage volunteers to do such analyses and to prepare reviews for inclusion in these reports. Our data access policy is available to read on our website ([www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-access-policy](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/rbbp-access-policy)).

### The Panel

The current membership of the Panel (July 2012) is Mark Eaton (Chairman), Ian Francis, Simon Gillings, Andrew King, David Norman, David Stroud and Mark Holling (Secretary). As Chairman since 2008, David



Stroud has ably steered the developments documented in our annual reports; Mark Eaton took on the role of Chairman in April 2012. Members serve in a personal capacity, but some also reflect the interests and requirements of the funding partners, JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies) and RSPB, as well as the BTO. Panel

## Terminology

### Recording areas

The recording areas used in this report are the same as in previous reports (see Holling *et al.* 2007 and [www.rbbp.org.uk](http://www.rbbp.org.uk)); these match the bird recording areas used by recorders across the UK, with Gower and East Glamorgan presented separately *contra* Ballance & Smith (2008). We attempt to collate all breeding records by recording area (usually 'county') wherever possible and urge contributors to submit records in the same manner, via recorders. In some cases, records are presented under different area groupings, for instance by Raptor Study Group (RSG) area. Thus, the Central Scotland RSG covers an area roughly equivalent to the Upper Forth recording area, but does include parts of neighbouring recording areas including Clyde; the South Strathclyde RSG area includes both Ayrshire and Clyde and some of the Clyde Islands; and the Tayside RSG area equates approximately to the recording areas of Angus & Dundee together with Perth & Kinross. However, North-east Scotland RSG includes both that recording area and the eastern part of the Moray & Nairn recording area, and Highland RSG includes not only the Highland recording area but also the western part of Moray & Nairn. Scottish Raptor Study Group area boundaries are shown on their website at [www.scottishraptorgroups.org/areas](http://www.scottishraptorgroups.org/areas).

Readers should note the revised treatment of records listed in this report from the Greater London recording area, which covers all areas within a 20-mile radius of St Paul's Cathedral. To reduce the possibility of duplication, we now list records from the Inner London area and the old county of Middlesex under the Greater London heading. Records away from this area and within the counties surrounding London – Hertfordshire, Essex, Kent and Surrey – are listed under those county headings.

### Species banners

For all regular breeding species (those which have bred in the UK at some time and have been recorded as at least present in eight or more of the last ten years), we give four pieces of information:

membership aims to achieve broadly representative geographic coverage and to include members who have active involvement in monitoring schemes and specialist research groups, or who participate in various external groups, to facilitate liaison between the Panel and researchers, ringers, surveyors and conservation practitioners.

1. An indication of population status in one of four categories:
  - Very rare (<30 breeding pairs (bp) per annum);
  - Rare (30–300 breeding pairs per annum);
  - Scarce (301–1,000 breeding pairs per annum);
  - Less Scarce (>1,000 breeding pairs per annum).
2. A population estimate, based where possible on the mean maximum population size from the last five years and shown as '5-yr mean' (in this report the five years are 2006–10). In some cases, we show the totals estimated in national surveys, or, particularly for species with poor coverage, the best national population estimate.
3. The degree of coverage, defined as follows:
  - near-complete (RBBP reports present more or less accurate annual totals);
  - high (a good estimate of the number of pairs breeding annually, though a small but unknown proportion has not been recorded/reported);
  - moderate (a less accurate estimate of the number of pairs breeding annually, which is nonetheless a significant proportion of the total population);
  - low (the quality of the data received is so poor that population estimates are of little value for conservation or status reviews; however, maintaining an archive of known sites is useful, and this information can be used in the design of future targeted surveys).
4. The population status as determined by Birds of Conservation Concern 3 (BoCC3) (Eaton *et al.* 2009).

The BoCC3 status can be Red, Amber or Green. The majority of Red- and Amber-listed species on the RBBP list are categorised as such because of some criteria related to their breeding status, whether it be population size (rarity or recent/historical decline), breeding range (localisation or



decline) or international importance of the UK breeding population. Some Amber-listed species are also noted as being Species of European Conservation Concern (SPEC). The only species in this report which is Amber-listed for criteria that are not breeding-related is the Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*, which owes its status to the localised distribution and international importance of its wintering population.

Occasional and potential breeding species are labelled as such, with additional information where applicable.

#### Definitions of breeding evidence

The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' follow those recommended by the European Bird Census Council (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Within tables, the abbreviation 'Confirmed breeding pairs' means 'Number of pairs confirmed breeding'. Where tables show the number of occupied territories, these are the sum of confirmed and probable breeding pairs, as territorial birds are classed as being probably breeding, unless a nest has (at least) progressed to the stage where eggs have been laid, in which case the pair is classified as a confirmed breeding pair. It is important to note that

confirmed breeding is *not* the same as successful breeding; nests that fail with eggs or with young still fall into the confirmed category. A successful breeding pair is one that fledges at least one young bird from a nesting attempt. In species accounts, the following terminology is used: *x* pairs bred (= confirmed breeding); *y* pairs probably bred; and *z* pairs possibly bred.

Readers should note that in all cases the identity of the birds has been confirmed; it is only breeding *status* that is possible/probable/confirmed. Probable breeding is as defined by EBCC (e.g. a pair holding territory), and does not mean that a breeding attempt probably (i.e. was likely to have) occurred.

#### Definition of numbers used

Within each species account, numbers given in the format '1–4 pairs' indicate (in this case) one confirmed breeding pair and a possible maximum total of four breeding pairs. In the tables, 'n/a' indicates that no data were received from that county, but the species normally breeds there. For some species, estimated totals (in round brackets) are also included, where these have been provided by county recorders according to the criteria given on the RBBP website.



Andrew Bloomfield

**202–205.** Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, Norfolk, July–August 2010. The first modern-day colony of Eurasian Spoonbills in Britain featuring: a pair at the nest (202); an adult on guard (203); recently fledged young begging (204); and a family group (205). Note that there is also a Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* in plate 202.



Andrew Bloomfield



Andrew Bloomfield



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### Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 16 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

**Amber**

20 sites: 14–21 pairs. The small population of breeding Whooper Swans in the Strathfarrar area of Highland originated from injured birds (possibly rehabilitated to the wild), which were subsequently joined by wild birds to form a resident breeding population. Since there are other instances of apparently wild birds not migrating in the spring but remaining to breed, we have decided to include such pairs in this report rather than treat them as naturalised birds in RBBP's report on non-native breeders. The latter will now include only naturalised pairs that result directly from known artificial releases. In 2010, there was one such pair, in Bedfordshire. The 5-year mean has been amended to take this change into account.

England, N

Cumbria One site: two birds present, 11th–28th June.

Wales

Meirionnydd One site: a pair summered and may have attempted to breed. One of the birds was injured.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One site: one pair bred, and had three cygnets in July.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Two sites: three pairs were present in suitable nesting habitat but did not breed. Caithness One site: one pair probably bred. Highland Three sites: three pairs bred. Outer Hebrides Three sites: three pairs bred; two were successful, raising four cygnets each. Shetland Seven sites: six pairs bred and one further pair was on territory. Four successful pairs fledged 15 young.

Northern Ireland

Co. Derry One site: one pair fledged six young.

### Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

**First documented breeding in 2010**

**Coverage: near-complete**

**Amber**

Three sites: 2–3 pairs. Although summering Pink-footed Geese are recorded not infrequently in the UK, reports of breeding have so far been restricted to birds that have apparently escaped from collections. However, three records in 2010 seem to relate to wild birds lingering in the spring, perhaps because of injury, and two of the three pairs bred successfully. Consequently, this represents the first recorded breeding of Pink-footed Goose in the wild in the UK. Future reports of breeding Pink-feet should include notes on their origin, if known, to help monitor the species' status as a breeding bird in the UK.

England, N

Cumbria One site: one pair fledged eight young. The adults may have been injured but the possibility that they were escaped birds cannot be ruled out entirely. From late June into July there were an additional 13 birds at this site.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one pair fledged four young; the adults were free-flying and unringed. Outer Hebrides One site: one pair, suspected to be wild birds and present with breeding Greylag Geese *Anser anser*; they may have bred but no young were seen.

### Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

**Rare: 5-yr mean 145 bp**

**Coverage: low**

**Amber**

94 sites: 50–170 pairs. As in previous reports, summering birds and pairs that showed no evidence of breeding are noted but not included in the totals. As usual, about half of the records came from Scotland; elsewhere only Co. Durham and Yorkshire held significant numbers.

England, SW

Somerset One site: four pairs possibly bred.

England, SE

Kent One site: two pairs probably bred. Summering birds were also reported from Buckinghamshire (one



pair present from April to July but breeding not attempted), Essex (at least 13 birds at four sites), Surrey (one male) and Sussex (45 birds).

England, E

Cambridgeshire Three sites: 14 pairs possibly bred. Norfolk Three sites: one pair bred (brood of seven) and four pairs possibly bred, plus summering birds elsewhere. Northamptonshire Four sites: seven pairs possibly bred.

England, C

Leicestershire & Rutland Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. Nottinghamshire Two sites: one pair bred (brood of two) and one pair possibly bred; also three summering birds.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. Cumbria One site: one pair possibly bred. Co. Durham Eight sites: 14 pairs bred (14 broods totalling 72 young) and three pairs probably bred. Lancashire & N Merseyside Summering birds only, no signs of breeding. Northumberland Three sites: three pairs bred, but one major site not surveyed. Yorkshire Five sites: two pairs bred, seven pairs probably bred and nine pairs possibly bred. Also summering birds in Greater Manchester.

Wales

Anglesey One site: five pairs possibly bred. Caernarfonshire One site: one pair probably bred.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire Two sites: one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. Borders One site: one pair possibly bred. Dumfries & Galloway Three sites: three pairs possibly bred. Lothian One site: one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, Mid

Angus & Dundee One site: one pair bred. North-east Scotland Three sites: two pairs bred (brood of six at one site), and one pair possibly bred. Perth & Kinross Five sites: two pairs bred (brood of four at one site) and four pairs probably bred.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Two sites: one pair bred (two large young) and one pair possibly bred. Caithness Four sites: one pair bred and three pairs probably bred. Highland 17 sites: 11 pairs bred, 25 pairs probably bred and three pairs possibly bred. Orkney Three sites: two pairs bred and four pairs probably bred. Outer Hebrides 12 sites: six pairs bred, one pair probably bred and seven pairs possibly bred. Shetland Two sites: three pairs bred.

Northern Ireland

Co. Down One site: one pair possibly bred.

### **Pintail *Anas acuta***

**Rare: 5-yr mean 33 bp**

**Coverage: high**

**Amber**

21 sites: 10–37 pairs. Confirmed breeding pairs were restricted to just five counties; Orkney remains the stronghold, with almost half of the total pairs recorded (18). The Bedfordshire record is the first confirmed breeding record for that county.

England, SW

Somerset One site: one pair probably bred.

England, SE

Bedfordshire One site: one pair bred. Kent Two sites: three pairs possibly bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Three sites: four pairs bred but young seen at only one site. Suffolk Two sites: three pairs possibly bred, but these may have been summering non-breeders.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one pair bred.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one pair bred (one brood of five seen) and four pairs probably bred. Orkney Nine sites: three pairs bred, five pairs probably bred and ten pairs possibly bred. At least 15 ducklings were recorded in the three broods.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Rare: 5-yr mean 93 bp

Coverage: high



55 sites: 15–98 pairs. Because Garganeys occur widely on passage, often migrating in pairs, the records here refer to longer-staying individuals recorded after mid May. Applying these criteria has resulted in consistent annual totals (maxima between 85 and 103 in the last five years) but confirmed breeding is almost wholly confined to the counties of eastern and southeastern England.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: one pair possibly bred although only recorded late in the season. Devon One site: one pair probably bred. Gloucestershire Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. Hampshire Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. Somerset Four sites: four pairs bred, four pairs probably bred and four pairs possibly bred.

England, SE

Essex One site: one pair possibly bred. Kent Eight sites: two pairs bred, seven pairs probably bred and seven pairs possibly bred. Oxfordshire One site: five pairs probably bred. Sussex Two sites: three pairs probably bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Four sites: four pairs bred and 14 pairs probably bred. Lincolnshire Four sites: two pairs bred and three pairs probably bred. Norfolk Four sites: two pairs bred, two pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred. Northamptonshire Two sites: four pairs possibly bred. Suffolk One site: one pair possibly bred.

England, C

Derbyshire One site: one pair possibly bred. Nottinghamshire One site: one pair probably bred. Staffordshire One site: one pair bred.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: one pair possibly bred. Northumberland One site: one pair possibly bred. Yorkshire Four sites: seven pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred.

Scotland, S

Borders One site: one pair possibly bred. Dumfries & Galloway Two sites: two pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, Mid

Fife One site: one pair probably bred. North-east Scotland One site: one pair probably bred.

Scotland, N & W

Orkney One site: one pair possibly bred.

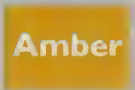
Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: one pair probably bred. Co. Derry One site: one pair probably bred. Co. Down One site: one pair probably bred.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,016 bp

Coverage: high



328–1,007 pairs. The RBBP has now been monitoring Shovelers for five years and the total number of breeding pairs is consistently in the order of 1,000. The highest numbers are most regularly reported from Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Yorkshire, each totalling over 100 pairs in most years.

Shoveler	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs	Greater London	1	1
			Hertfordshire	0	13
England, SW	12	37	Kent	19	46
Avon	0	1	Oxfordshire	1	11
Devon	0	2	Sussex	0	10
Dorset	2	6	England, E	158	411
Gloucestershire	1	3	Cambridgeshire	7	179
Hampshire	8	8	Lincolnshire	20	32
Isle of Wight	0	6	Norfolk	127	127
Somerset	1	11	Northamptonshire	3	3
England, SE	24	123	Suffolk	1	70
Bedfordshire	1	3	England, C	8	24
Essex	2	39	Leicestershire & Rutland	5	5



Shoveler cont.			Scotland, S	4	26
	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs	Ayrshire	0	4
			Borders	1	2
Nottinghamshire	3	9	Clyde	3	8
Shropshire	0	2	Dumfries & Galloway	0	10
Staffordshire	0	1	Lothian	0	2
Warwickshire	0	7	Scotland, Mid	18	29
England, N	83	230	Angus & Dundee	0	8
Cheshire & Wirral	0	11	Fife	1	1
Cleveland	4	6	North-east Scotland	5	5
Cumbria	0	5	Perth & Kinross	12	15
Co. Durham	2	2	Scotland, N & W	18	93
Greater Manchester	0	9	Argyll	3	28
Lancashire & N Merseyside	19	42	Highland	0	4
Northumberland	1	1	Orkney	11	42
Yorkshire	57	154	Outer Hebrides	3	18
Wales	2	32	Shetland	1	1
Anglesey	0	26	Northern Ireland	1	2
Ceredigion	0	3	Co. Antrim	1	1
Denbigh & Flint	1	1	Co. Down	0	1
Gwent	1	2	TOTALS	328	1,007

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 632 bp

Coverage: high



339–700 pairs. These figures and the distribution of pairs across the UK are virtually identical to those reported for 2009.

Common Pochard	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs	Nottinghamshire	5	7
			Shropshire	0	2
			Worcestershire	2	2
England, SW	18	108	England, N	95	132
Avon	2	2	Cheshire & Wirral	18	21
Devon	2	3	Cleveland	10	10
Dorset	5	5	Greater Manchester	1	12
Gloucestershire	0	5	Lancashire & N Merseyside	9	29
Hampshire	6	6	Northumberland	3	3
Somerset	2	85	Yorkshire	54	57
Wiltshire	1	2	Wales	14	41
England, SE	129	263	Anglesey	3	30
Bedfordshire	2	2	Cardiganshire	6	6
Berkshire	2	2	Gwent	5	5
Buckinghamshire	2	2	Scotland, S	0	1
Essex	30	68	Borders	0	1
Greater London	15	16	Scotland, Mid	1	4
Hertfordshire	21	46	Fife	0	1
Kent	53	116	Perth & Kinross	1	3
Oxfordshire	1	7	Scotland, N & W	0	1
Surrey	1	1	Orkney	0	1
Sussex	2	3	Northern Ireland	13	37
England, E	62	102	Co. Antrim	2	6
Cambridgeshire	2	16	Co. Armagh	7	24
Lincolnshire	5	15	Co. Down	0	1
Norfolk	54	54	Co. Tyrone	4	6
Suffolk	1	17	TOTALS	339	700
England, C	7	11			

**Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra***

**Rare: 52 bp (2007 survey)**

**Coverage: moderate**

**Red**

13–42 pairs. In 2010 detailed counts were received from the Flows of Caithness and Sutherland and from some breeding lochs in west Highland and Perthshire. In the wake of the national survey in 2007, and given the scarcity and high conservation priority of this species, the RSPB is currently studying Common Scoters in more detail, but we strongly encourage observers to report all sightings on potential breeding lochs to county recorders.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross Three pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, N & W

Five extensive sites. In the Flow Country (Caithness/Highland): 11 pairs bred and 11 pairs probably bred, with four young known to have fledged. Elsewhere in Highland two pairs bred and 15 pairs probably bred at four sites. Only two broods were recorded, one of a single chick on 29th July, and another of four on 8th July which was reduced to one by 25th July.

**Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula***

**Rare: 5-yr mean 196 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

**Amber**

196 breeding females. Data on at least 117 nests in Scotland were received, from which the Goldeneye Study Group estimated a population of at least 195 breeding females in northern Scotland (based on the usual assumption that around two-thirds of all clutches laid involve more than one female). In addition, a pair bred in Northumberland, well away from the core range. The first confirmed breeding in England was in 2008, in Avon.

England, SW

Avon One site: one pair possibly bred. After display was observed in April, two females remained into summer when one was seen behaving in an agitated manner, suggesting that there may have been young present, although none was seen. The confirmed breeding in the county in 2008 was at the same site.

England, N

Northumberland One site: one pair bred. A female with ten ducklings was seen on 24th May and eight young remained on 21st June.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Deeside: 114 nestboxes were checked and 38 were found to be occupied; a nest in a natural hole was also found. In total 298 eggs were laid, 146 eggs hatched in 16 nests.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Badenoch & Strathspey: 208 nestboxes were checked and 77 were found to be occupied; a nest in a natural hole was also found. In total 726 eggs were laid, 206 eggs hatched in 41 nests.

Northern Ireland

Co. Armagh/Co. Tyrone A pair was recorded on 5th June and a male was still present later in the month in the Lough Neagh area.

**Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus***

**Rare: 5-yr mean 210 lekking males**

**Coverage: moderate**

**Red**

106 leks were monitored and, of these, 71 were active and a total of 213 displaying males were counted.

Scotland, S

Clyde One lek monitored but no activity recorded.

Scotland, Mid

Moray & Nairn 11 active leks: 19 males. North-east Scotland 13 active leks: 21 males. Perth & Kinross Six active leks: eight males.

Scotland, N & W

Highland 41 active leks: 165 males. In the Abernethy Forest RSPB recording area, 25 hens with 23 chicks were counted.





Mark Hamblin

**206.** Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, Highland, February 2010. A winter census of Capercaillies in 2009/10 produced an estimate of 1,285 individual birds, 35% fewer than in winter 2003/04.

A Capercaillie census was undertaken in the winter of 2009/10, described in detail below by Mark Eaton, which suggests that the overall population has not recovered from recent declines.

The annual spring counts made at virtually all known Capercaillie leks, as summarised in RBBP reports, give an indication of broad changes in the population. The number of leks monitored has risen from 73 in 2002 to 106 in 2010 (this being the most monitored in any single year to date). However, it seems very likely that some lek sites are as yet undiscovered, particularly those attended by single or small numbers of males. In addition, the need to avoid disturbing lekking Capercaillies at this sensitive time means that birds at some leks may be missed, and the maximum number of males attending a lek on the morning a count is made may be considerably lower than the total number attending that lek over the course of the spring. As a consequence, surveys of the entire population are conducted every six years as part of the Statutory Conservation Agency and RSPB Annual Breeding Bird Scheme (SCARABBS) programme, in order to produce a more robust measure of change.

Unusually for a UK breeding species, national population surveys of the Capercaillie are conducted in the winter to avoid disturbing breeding birds and this in turn presents its own problems. The most recent survey, conducted by the RSPB with support from SNH in the 2009/10 winter, encountered some unusually severe winter weather, with extended periods of snow and sub-zero temperatures hampering fieldwork. However, a total of 629 2-km-long transects were surveyed throughout the known range, allowing an estimate of 1,285 individuals (95% confidence limits 822–1,882) to be derived, with 75% of this number being in Badenoch & Strathspey (Ewing *et al.* 2012). This estimate is 35% lower than that for the 2003/04 winter (Eaton *et al.* 2007a), although the relative imprecision of population estimates makes it difficult to be certain of a genuine decline; it is clear, however, that the Capercaillie is not making a recovery from the population crash seen from the 1970s onwards. This is despite substantial investment in Capercaillie conservation, including the removal and marking of deer fences, habitat enhancement (e.g. woodland thinning) and brood-habitat creation, and predator control during the breeding season. It may be that recent wet summers (such as in 2007 and 2008), and consequent poor breeding success, are acting against the benefits of such conservation work.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 538 singing males      Coverage: high

Amber

6–572 singing males or pairs. Confirmed breeding was recorded in four counties: Borders (one pair), Essex (one pair), Northumberland (one pair) and Yorkshire (three pairs). Quail numbers vary greatly between years, depending on the scale of irruptions from the south, and over 30% fewer Quails were reported in 2010 than in 2009. But whereas in 2009 almost a third of birds were in Scotland, in 2010 Scotland held just 16% of the UK total, meaning that the distribution was (typically) more southerly. There were notable concentrations in both Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, and the totals for those counties do not include a record of 30 Quails flushed from a single field during harvesting operations on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, on 1st August.

Common Quail	Total pairs or singing males		
		Cumbria	4
		Co. Durham	7
		Lancashire & N Merseyside	15
England, SW	110	Northumberland	15
Avon	12	Yorkshire	95
Cornwall	1	Wales	19
Devon	9	Anglesey	1
Dorset	2	Breconshire	1
Gloucestershire	30	Caernarfonshire	2
Hampshire	10	Ceredigion	1
Somerset	1	East Glamorgan	1
Wiltshire	45	Gower	2
England, SE	79	Montgomeryshire	1
Bedfordshire	4	Pembrokeshire	2
Berkshire	10	Radnorshire	8
Buckinghamshire	6	Scotland, S	37
Essex	7	Borders	21
Hertfordshire	17	Dumfries & Galloway	2
Kent	4	Lothian	14
Oxfordshire	15	Scotland, Mid	38
Sussex	16	Angus & Dundee	9
England, E	57	Fife	5
Cambridgeshire	11	Moray & Nairn	2
Lincolnshire	19	North-east Scotland	15
Norfolk	18	Perth & Kinross	6
Northamptonshire	3	Upper Forth	1
Suffolk	6	Scotland, N & W	16
England, C	65	Argyll	2
Derbyshire	18	Caithness	3
Leicestershire & Rutland	8	Fair Isle	2
Nottinghamshire	4	Highland	1
Shropshire	19	Orkney	4
Staffordshire	7	Outer Hebrides	1
Warwickshire	8	Shetland	3
Worcestershire	1	Northern Ireland	2
England, N	149	Co. Antrim	2
Cheshire & Wirral	10		
Cleveland	3	TOTAL	572



**Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*****Less scarce: 1,255 bp (2006 survey)****Coverage: low****Amber**

Details were received for only 195 nesting pairs, far fewer than in 2009, and again only a sample of the estimated 1,255 pairs breeding in Scotland (Dillon *et al.* 2009). Since we are unable to provide accurate figures for most recording areas, we present only those records away from the core area of north and west Scotland, adding some details from intensively monitored areas in the Northern Isles.

In Orkney, the main sites that are regularly monitored are on Hoy, where 203 sites were checked, 58 found to be occupied and eggs laid at 56. At least 34 pairs were successful and these fledged 45 young. At least 81 pairs were confirmed breeding in Orkney, although not all sites were checked. A sample of sites in Shetland is monitored by the Shetland Ringing Group, who reported another poor season in terms of both number of successful pairs and productivity: a total of 26 pairs were successful, compared with an average of 47.3 during 1980–2009 (Okill 2010). On Fetlar, 19 pairs fledged 11 young, while on Foula nine pairs fledged just four young.

Scotland, S

Clyde At a traditional site, one bird was recorded in display flight in May, but there were no further observations. Clyde Islands Five pairs bred (but limited information received).

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One pair bred and one pair possibly bred.

**Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*****Rare: 217 bp (2006 survey)****Coverage: moderate****Amber**

55–77 pairs. Fewer pairs were recorded in 2010 than in many recent years, partly due to a reduction in monitoring by a few observers in Highland. Black-throated Divers breed beside large freshwater lochs, especially those with complex shorelines and islands. Birdwatchers resident in or visiting western Scotland are encouraged to report all sightings of pairs of this species on potential nesting lochs to help improve monitoring of the numbers of this rare and iconic bird of the Highlands.

Scotland, S

Clyde One pair bred but was again unsuccessful. Clyde Islands No details of breeding or numbers available, but pairs known to be present. Dumfries & Galloway One pair bred with young seen in June.

Scotland, Mid

One pair bred but eggs lost, possibly due to predation, and three pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Eight sites were monitored, and pairs were present at six. Four pairs bred (two of which fledged a total of three young), and two pairs possibly bred. Caithness Eight pairs bred and one pair probably bred. Highland Details were received on 48 pairs of which 35 pairs bred, five pairs probably bred and eight pairs possibly bred. Outer Hebrides Details were received on eight pairs of which five pairs bred and three pairs probably bred.

**Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli*****Potential breeder**

0–1 pairs. Macaronesian Shearwater (or Little Shearwater, as a majority of British birders continue to know it as) breeds on islands in the mid Atlantic, such as the Azores and Canary Islands, and is generally confined to the warm waters surrounding them. A calling male was on Skomer, Pembrokeshire, in 1981 and 1982 (Spencer *et al.* 1986), so this species has a track record for repeated visits to shearwater colonies in the southwest of the UK. The 2010 bird, a male that gave nocturnal advertising calls from a burrow in a Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus* colony on Lundy, was never actually seen; it was apparently also present in 2009 (although no details have yet been submitted to BBRC) and subsequently returned again in 2011.

England, SW

Devon A male was heard calling from a burrow on most nights between 4th and 24th June.

**Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*****Rare: 5-yr mean 84 booming males****Coverage: near-complete****Red**

56 sites: 87–106 booming males with 41 breeding attempts at 17 sites. The numbers show the minimum number of booming males (based on residency at a site for at least a week, although this may include some wintering birds early in the season), while the maximum figure includes males booming for a shorter period only or where it was not possible to confirm that different males were involved. The status of Bitterns in the last 100 years was reviewed recently by Brown *et al.* (2012). Simon Wotton, RSPB, commented as follows.

The 2009/10 winter was the coldest in the UK since 1978/79. From mid December, cold weather predominated across much of the UK, with spells of snow and very low temperatures. It is likely that this bout of severe weather affected the condition of wintering Bitterns, as they struggled to find food. The cold winter was then followed by one of the driest springs in recent years, at least in East Anglia, resulting in low water levels at some sites, especially in the Norfolk Broads. The distribution and abundance of Bitterns in winter 2009/10 was reviewed by Wotton *et al.* (2011).

Despite the harsh winter, there was another increase in the number of booming Bitterns in 2010. A minimum of 87 booming males was confirmed, all in England, an increase of 6% on the 2009 figure of 82. The number of sites supporting at least one booming male in 2010 increased to 47, from 43 in 2009. Booming was confirmed at new sites in Cambridgeshire, Kent, Somerset and Yorkshire, although no booming was recorded at new sites in 2009 in Essex, Greater Manchester, Nottinghamshire or Wales.

England, SW

Somerset Six sites: 14–19 booming males; 14 confirmed nests.

England, SE

Kent Four sites: 3–4 booming males; one confirmed nest. Sussex One site: one booming male.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Eight sites: 8–11 booming males; one confirmed nest. Lincolnshire Three sites: 3–4 booming males. Norfolk *North Norfolk coast* Six sites: 5–7 booming males; two confirmed nests. *Norfolk Broads* 12 sites: 17–19 booming males; six confirmed nests. Suffolk *Suffolk coast* Seven sites: 26–27 booming males; 11 confirmed nests. *Fens* One site: six booming males; five confirmed nests.

England, C

Staffordshire One site: 0–1 booming male.

England, N

Greater Manchester One site: 0–1 booming male. Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: one booming male. Yorkshire Four sites: 3–4 booming males; one confirmed nest.

Wales

Anglesey One site: 0–1 booming male.

**Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*****Occasional breeder; previously recorded in 1984**

One site: one pair bred. This is only the second confirmed breeding record of Little Bitterns in the UK, although the occurrence of a barking male at the Somerset site in 2009 can now be seen as a precursor to this event. (The advertising call of a male Little Bittern is known as barking, owing to its similarity to a deep bark of a dog.) Observations of breeding behaviour in its reedbed habitat are difficult to make, and careful descriptions were required to provide sufficient evidence for BBRC, including of the juvenile (Hudson *et al.* 2011 and in prep.).

England, SW

Somerset One site: one pair bred. Reports of a barking male were followed by the sighting of a female from 3rd July. The pair was then seen making feeding flights, providing confirmation that young had hatched, while a recently fledged juvenile was seen on 23rd July.





John Crispin

**207.** Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Somerset, July 2010. Regular sightings of an adult flying over the reedbed were a reliable indicator that the bird was making feeding flights and that there were young in the nest.

### Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

**Occasional breeder; first bred in 2008**

One site: 0–1 pairs. A colonisation to emulate that of the Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* was anticipated by some after the first breeding of Cattle Egrets, in 2008, but progress since then has been somewhat disappointing. It can be difficult to confirm breeding of single pairs of egrets within colonies of other species, and observers in the south of England should take care to check for this species when counting Little Egret colonies.

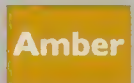
England, SW

Somerset One site: two adults within a heronry probably bred but no young were seen.

### Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

**Scarce: 5-yr mean 739 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**



82 sites: 718–800 pairs. As Little Egrets become an ever more familiar sight in southern Britain, it seems that finding and counting nests is becoming less of a priority in some parts of the country and not all colonies are being counted each year. Consequently, the totals presented here are becoming a somewhat less accurate summary of the bird's UK status, yet it is still likely that there are fewer than 1,000 pairs of Little Egrets nationwide. The species remains scarce north of a line between Morecambe Bay and the Tees. We are keen to encourage annual counts of *all* egret colonies, with submission of the results to county recorders and to the BTO as part of its annual Heronries Census.

Most Little Egret colonies in the UK are relatively small. Mean colony size in 2010 was 9.8 nests, although there were six colonies with at least 30 nests (in Caernarfonshire, Cheshire & Wirral, Devon, Hampshire, Kent and Norfolk). The largest colony was at Northward Hill, in Kent, although the total of 94 nests in 2010 was below the peak count of 124 in 2009, presumably an effect of the cold winter in 2009/10.

Little Egret	No. sites	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, SW	31	186	230
Cornwall	5	20	20
Devon	8	59	84
Dorset	5	29	29
Gloucestershire	3	15	16
Hampshire	5	45	61
Somerset	4	17	19
Wiltshire	1*	1+	1+
England, SE	20	219	224
Bedfordshire	1	0	2
Berkshire	2	2	3
Buckinghamshire	2	6	6
Essex	5	57	57
Kent	4	115	115
Oxfordshire	1	2	2
Sussex	5	37	39
England, E	21	199	218
Cambridgeshire	3	4	17
Lincolnshire	5	50	56
Norfolk	8	107	107
Northamptonshire	1	1	1
Suffolk	4	37	37
England, N	2	31	31
Cheshire & Wirral	1	30	30
Yorkshire	1	1	1
Wales	7	83	95
Anglesey	1	3	3
Caernarfonshire	2	54	64
Ceredigion	1	11	11
Gower	1	12	14
Gwent	1*	1+	1+
Pembrokeshire	1	2	2
Northern Ireland	1	0	2
Co. Down	1	0	2
TOTALS	82	718	800
* Colony at site but no count.			

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

Potential breeder

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. The Great White Egret is another heron that has become a more frequent visitor to the UK in recent years and has now occurred in most recording areas but, perhaps surprisingly, not in previous RBBP reports. In 2010, observations of pairs in both Somerset and Suffolk revealed signs of potential breeding behaviour and so are documented here. As this report was being finalised, news of a confirmed breeding attempt in Somerset in 2012 was made public (see pp. 423–424), marking the long-predicted addition of Great White Egret to the British breeding avifauna.

England, SW

Somerset One site: regular sightings of two adults throughout the breeding season included the pair visiting the same patch of reeds, suggesting a nesting attempt, but there were no confirmed feeding flights or young birds seen.

England, E

Suffolk One site: a pair was present in a heronry throughout the breeding season, but is not thought to have nested.



**Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*****First bred in 2010**

One site: one pair bred. Following the events of 2007 (when a breeding attempt at Minsmere in Suffolk was curtailed only when heavy rain and flooding at the site in June led to the departure of the birds), the successful breeding of a pair at Dungeness RSPB reserve in 2010 becomes the first confirmed breeding of Purple Herons in the UK.

England, SE

Kent One site: one pair bred. The birds were first recorded on 27th April and remained until 23rd August, fledging two young.

**Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*****Occasional breeder; last bred in 2008**

One site: six pairs. A review and a full list of breeding attempts by Eurasian Spoonbills in the UK was included in the RBBP report for 2008 (Holling *et al.* 2010), when a pair nested successfully in Dumfries & Galloway. That record was only the second successful breeding attempt in modern times, but all records of confirmed breeding have involved just single pairs. The establishment of a colony of Spoonbills in Norfolk in 2010 (see plates 202–205, pp. 358–359) thus provides a step-change in the colonisation of the country by this species, leading to the expectation that we can at long last expect Spoonbills to become a regular component of our rare breeding avifauna.

In addition to the breeding colony, summering birds were reported elsewhere in East Anglia, in Kent and in Sussex – where a single bird in a Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* colony from late May into June was seen nest-building.

England, E

Norfolk One site: six pairs bred, ten young fledged.

**Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*****Rare: 5-yr mean 31 bp****Coverage: near-complete****Amber**

11 sites: 22 pairs bred but only six sites produced young. Three singles at three other sites. Stuart Benn, RSPB, commented as follows.

As in previous years, all occupied sites were monitored and the outcome recorded: 106 lochs were checked, including all those with a history of occupation since 1990. The number of breeding pairs (22) was the lowest recorded since regular monitoring began, in 1971. However, productivity was 0.82 young per territorial pair, well above the long-term average of 0.56. On the Scottish mainland, 11 sites were occupied by pairs and a further two by just a single bird; only six sites produced young, however (the equal second-lowest ever). The population is in steep decline and the situation appears critical – there is little doubt that the Slavonian Grebe is in big trouble as a UK breeding species. In 2010, SPAs held 11 pairs (50% of the total) and produced nine young (50%).

Scotland, Mid and N & W

Highland/Moray & Nairn 11 sites: 22 pairs reared 18 young. Two other sites also held single birds.

Orkney A single bird was present in June and July.

Stuart Benn, who has worked with this grebe for many years, has also researched the history of the Slavonian Grebe as a nesting species in the UK and here presents a review of its changing status.

Slavonian Grebe bones dating back to the tenth century have been excavated from inland middens in Iceland (McGovern *et al.* 2006) but, in the UK, we had to wait another millennium before Slavonian Grebes became part of our summer scene. The first recorded breeding was in 1909 at Loch Laide, west of Loch Ness (McGhie 1994). During the ensuing half century, the

Alan Harris



published record gives only tantalising glimpses of their numbers and distribution but it appears that they were never common. The few records that do exist suggest that, as now, their stronghold was around the northern part of the Great Glen but there are also records of breeding pairs from Sutherland, Caithness and Morayshire. Further historical material doubtless remains to be discovered and a search through museum specimens, and archived diaries and notebooks would be rewarding but for now, as with many other species, a full picture begins to emerge only from the time of the first Atlas (Sharrock 1976).

Malcolm Harvey and Roy Dennis began monitoring the breeding population in 1971 and this has continued annually ever since, undertaken by Malcolm, his volunteers and a succession of RSPB staff. It is known that not all young were counted in 1973 and the survey was incomplete in 1977 but otherwise it is believed that all pairs and young in the UK have been counted every year. This series is one of the longest running and most comprehensive set of annual counts of any British breeding bird and is an invaluable resource.

The very first RBBP summary covered 1973; although this was one of those incomplete years, it was able to report that 51 pairs of Slavonian Grebes reared at least 31 young, the bulk of these being in Inverness-shire. Most of the rest were in Morayshire but Caithness had a few pairs and there were the first breeding records from Perthshire. Numbers and distribution were similar in 1974, with the notable addition of a pair rearing one young in Aberdeenshire (an area that hasn't been occupied since). Caithness was abandoned after 1975 but elsewhere numbers continued to increase and reached 80 pairs in 1978. From then to the early 1990s was the heyday of the Slavonian Grebe as a breeding bird in the UK and though numbers did fluctuate a little (down to 63 pairs in some years), such declines were short-lived. Singles also summered in southern Scotland between 1985 and 1988, and southwest England in 1986. However, all was not positive, as breeding became restricted to the Inverness and Moray core areas following the last nesting in Perthshire in 1982, though birds continued to summer there for some years after that.

A major change occurred in 1994 when only 52 pairs were recorded on territory, a considerable drop from 73 the previous year; interestingly, this was mirrored by a similar fall in the grebe numbers returning to Mývatn, Iceland (A. Einarsson pers. comm.). The cause of this decline is unclear, although it coincided with a large seabird wreck on Britain's east coast during the previous winter. Whatever the reason, it heralded the start of a decline that levelled out only in 2000, by which time there were just 31 pairs remaining, almost half of those being at one site, Loch Ruthven.

The early years of this millennium saw something of a recovery (to 51 pairs by 2004) and also heralded a remarkable set of records from England. In 2005, a pair built a nest in Cleveland but it was taken over by Common Coots *Fulica atra*. Even more unlikely was the bird that paired with a Great Crested Grebe *P. cristatus* in Leicestershire & Rutland from 2006 to 2008, the first recorded instance of these species interbreeding in the world. Unfortunately, we are none the wiser about what this pairing would have produced. In 2006, eggs were laid and hatched but the young were

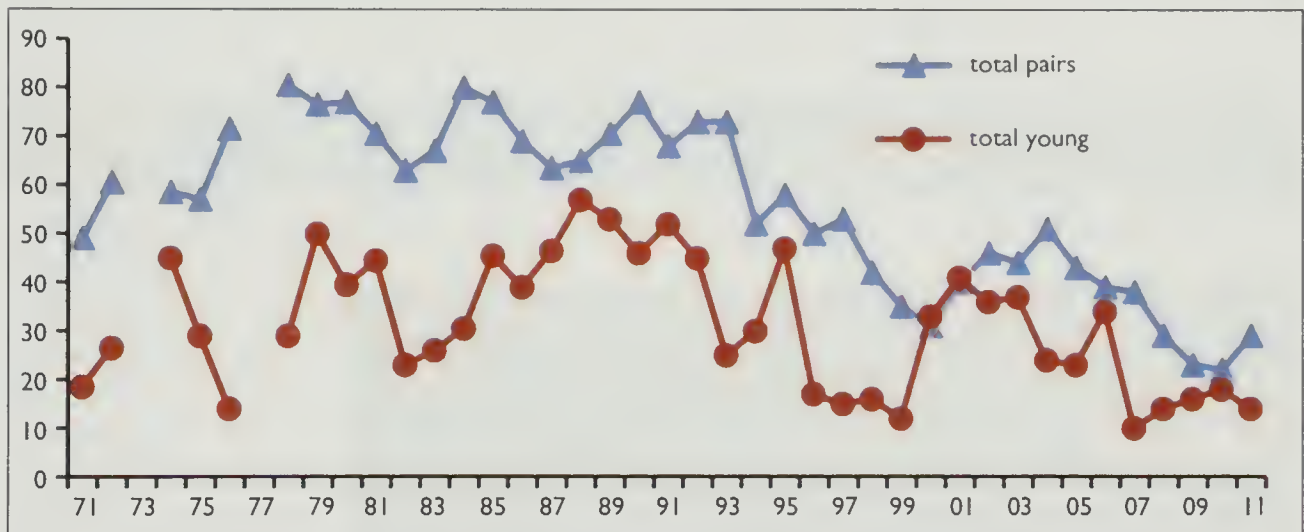


predated (Toon 2007). Eggs were laid again in the subsequent years but both attempts failed with the nest being flooded out in 2007 and deserted following disturbance in 2008.

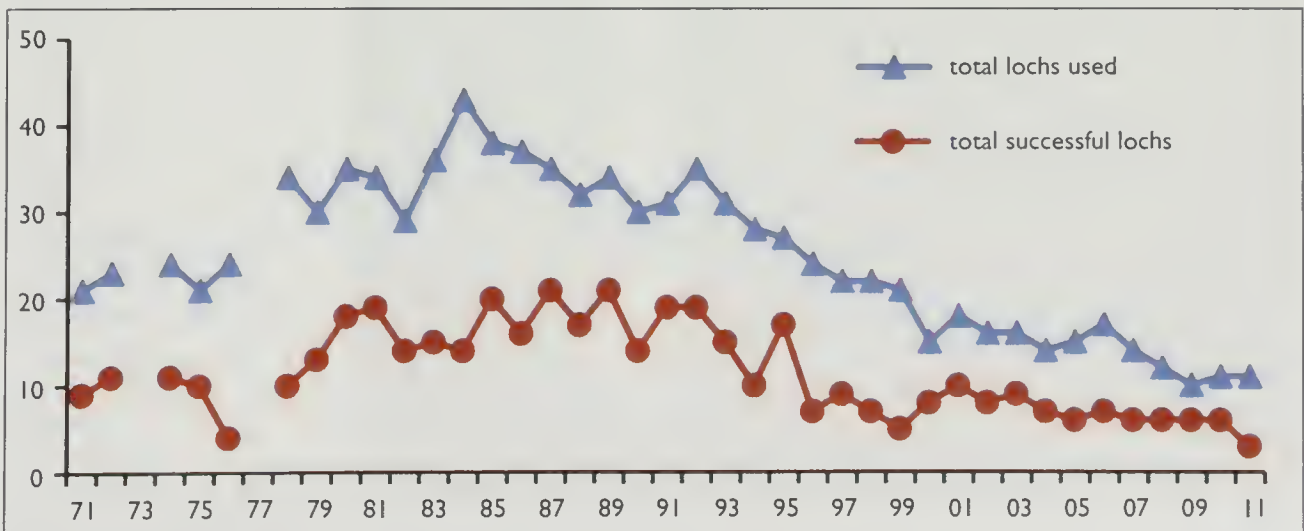
But these English records were set against the backdrop of a worsening situation in Scotland. After 2005, there has been a sustained decline – by 2010 the population had fallen to 22 pairs, the lowest level since regular monitoring began. Equally worrying is the fact that they have become increasingly restricted in distribution. Moray has been all but abandoned and, although birds have begun to summer in Orkney and Shetland, they haven't yet bred. Slavonian Grebes are now, effectively, restricted to fewer than a dozen lochs near Inverness.

These trends are interesting in themselves but become even more so when placed in a wider northern European context. The situation in Norway is complex; Slavonian Grebes in some areas are declining rapidly, and in an area around Tromsø have decreased from 230 to just 27 pairs since 2001 (K-B. Strann pers. comm.). However, in other parts of Norway the species has increased, particularly in the south but in the far north too (Øien *et al.* 2008). In Iceland, the population has undergone an overall, dramatic and sustained increase from 250 to over 1,000 pairs in the last 20 years (A. Einarsson, A. Petersson, L. Thorarinnsson pers. comm.).

Despite various theories, there has never been a convincing explanation for the species' restricted distribution in the UK and the reasons behind its decline. However, the RSPB has recently begun collaborating with Slavonian Grebe workers in Iceland and Norway. It is early days yet but the hope is that these wider datasets will offer the clues that allow us to identify what the causes of these population changes are and then carry out conservation action for this fantastic species.



**Fig. 1.** Total number of nesting pairs and young fledged by Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* in Scotland since 1971.



**Fig. 2.** Total number of lochs used by Slavonian Grebes in Scotland since 1971 and the number of lochs that held successful pairs.

**Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis***

**Rare: 5-yr mean 51 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**



15 sites: 38–49 pairs. Up to 64 young fledged. Fifteen sites is the lowest total reported since 1986 and continues the steady decline in numbers and distribution of Black-necked Grebes over the last 10–15 years. Regular sites in Borders and Staffordshire held no breeding birds in 2010 and some counties, such as Cheshire & Wirral, Lincolnshire, Northumberland and Nottinghamshire, had breeding birds at fewer sites than in 2009. Only Yorkshire saw an increase in the number of sites and pairs. However, the number of young fledged was higher than in recent years.

England, SE

Hertfordshire One site: nine pairs bred, 23 young seen but not all may have fledged. Kent One site: three pairs bred, fledging six young, and one pair probably bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair probably bred, with a third bird also present, but the three birds were also seen at two other sites nearby. Lincolnshire One site: one pair probably bred.

England, C

Nottinghamshire One site: one pair bred; two young fledged.

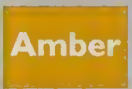
England, N

Cheshire & Wirral Two sites: (1) 11 pairs bred and fledged 11 young; (2) two pairs possibly bred. Cleveland A single bird present in April started nest-building but did not find a mate. Greater Manchester One site: four pairs bred; 13 young hatched but the number reduced to five later. Northumberland Two sites: (1) four pairs probably bred; (2) one pair possibly bred. Yorkshire Five sites: (1) six pairs bred, 11 young fledged; (2) one pair bred, fledging one young, and one pair possibly bred; (3) one pair bred, three young fledged; (4) one pair bred, two young fledged; (5) one pair bred, no data on productivity.

**Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus***

**Rare: 5-yr mean 41 bp**

**Coverage: high**



29–47 pairs; at least 40 young fledged. The increase in the number of pairs shown in the 2009



Damian Waters

**208.** Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Scotland, May 2010. Up to 47 pairs of Honey-buzzards were reported to the Panel in 2010, one of the highest totals in recent years.

report (*Brit. Birds* 104: 499) continues. Although we believe that the majority of known nesting pairs (if not location details) are now reported to the Panel, this is an unobtrusive species and there may well be undetected pairs in larger afforested areas; the issue is a lack of time available to experienced fieldworkers to seek out new territories. Wiseman’s (2012) recent description of the long-term study of this species in the New Forest is typical of the dedication and enthusiasm of small groups of such fieldworkers.



England, SW  
 Fourteen territories occupied in three counties. Ten pairs bred, fledging at least 17 young.

England, SE  
 Eleven territories occupied in three counties. Nine pairs bred, fledging 18 young. Single birds at other sites were widely reported indicating a potentially larger breeding population.

England, E, C & N  
 Eleven territories occupied in four counties. Six pairs bred fledging at least three young, though detailed information was lacking from some sites.

Wales  
 Six territories occupied in three counties. Four pairs bred, fledging two young.

Scotland  
 Five territories occupied in three counties. No confirmed breeding reported.

Red Kite
*Milvus milvus*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,164 bp

Coverage: moderate

Amber

A minimum of 1,193 pairs. The table mainly shows the number of pairs where nests are found and monitored; in Wales and the Chilterns (highlighted by an asterisk in the table) these figures are known to be gross underestimates. For instance, the Welsh Kite Trust believes that the Welsh population is over 1,000 pairs and the population of southern England is over 800 pairs. Factoring these into the national picture presented here suggests a more realistic figure of over 2,200 pairs in the UK. High breeding success and annual survival has fuelled the year-on-year increase of Red Kites, although illegal poisoning and direct persecution in parts of northern Scotland has slowed the growth there (Smart *et al.* 2010).

Red Kite		Northumberland	1
	Confirmed and probable breeding pairs	Yorkshire	84
		Wales	556*
England, SW	52	Breconshire	53
Dorset	1	Caernarfonshire	4
Hampshire	32	Carmarthenshire	76
Somerset	1	Ceredigion	170
Wiltshire	18	Denbigh & Flint	1
England, SE	133*	East Glamorgan	2
Bedfordshire	1	Gower	10
Berkshire	9	Gwent	4
Buckinghamshire	87*	Meirionnydd	6
Hertfordshire	10	Montgomeryshire	68
Oxfordshire	24*	Pembrokeshire	18
Sussex	2	Radnorshire	144
England, E	133	Scotland, S	53
Cambridgeshire	11	Ayrshire	1
Lincolnshire	15	Dumfries & Galloway	52
Norfolk	4	Scotland, Mid	68
Northamptonshire	103	North-east Scotland	11
England, C	29	Perth & Kinross	36
Herefordshire	5	Upper Forth	21
Leicestershire & Rutland	6	Scotland, N & W	53
Shropshire	17	Highland	53
Warwickshire	1	Northern Ireland	5
England, N	111	Co. Down	5
Co. Durham	26	TOTALS	1,193

## White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Rare: 5-yr mean 44 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Red

47–52 pairs fledged 46 young. This was the most successful year yet of the reintroduction scheme, with the most pairs breeding and the highest number of young fledged.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll 12 pairs bred, of which 11 fledged 15 young, and one further territorial pair. Highland (including Skye, Small Isles and mainland) 23 pairs bred, of which 14 fledged 16 young, and a further four territorial pairs. Outer Hebrides 12 pairs bred, of which eight pairs fledged 15 young.

## Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 384 bp

Coverage: high

Amber

258–327 breeding females/pairs. Fewer reports of Marsh Harriers were received in 2010, which may be a reflection of the high densities in east and southeast England, where not all pairs are found and recorded each year. For example, a survey of Marsh Harriers in Lincolnshire in 2009 found over 100 pairs, compared to the 64 reported below. The range extension to the west continues, with more pairs in Dorset and Somerset, a pair in Pembrokeshire and the first breeding in Cheshire & Wirral. There was no repeat of the successful nesting in Northumberland in 2009 and the only nesting pairs in Scotland were in the Tay reedbeds and in Highland, although there was a wide spread of summering birds in Scotland.

England, SW

Dorset Two pairs bred. Somerset Two pairs bred.

England, SE

Essex Seven pairs bred, two pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred. Kent 29 pairs bred, six pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred. Sussex Four pairs bred.

England, E

Cambridgeshire 17 pairs bred. Lincolnshire 41 pairs bred and 21 pairs probably bred. Norfolk 70 pairs bred, one pair probably bred and five pairs possibly bred. Suffolk 55 pairs bred, five pairs probably bred and two pairs possibly bred.

England, C

Nottinghamshire One pair bred, again fledging two young.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One pair bred, fledging three young. This is the first confirmed breeding in the county. Cleveland One pair possibly bred – nest-building seen early in the season but no activity later. Lancashire & N Merseyside Four pairs bred and one pair probably bred. Yorkshire 19 pairs bred, 15 pairs probably bred and six pairs possibly bred.

Wales

Pembrokeshire One pair probably bred. In April, the male was seen to bring food to an immature female at a presumed nest-site, but there was no further proof of nesting. It is, however, thought likely that the pair had a nest with eggs, but that no young hatched.

Scotland, Mid

Fife/Perth & Kinross Four pairs bred; all pairs were successful, fledging 11 young. In addition, in Fife a female stayed at one site for six weeks, in Moray & Nairn a male was present in spring for a month, and in North-east Scotland at one site there were up to three females and two males, but with no sign of nesting, while elsewhere, a female lingered for two weeks in May.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll A single female was seen frequently in May and early June. Highland One pair bred but failed after laying; elsewhere a single female was recorded nest-building although no male was seen.

Northern Ireland

Co. Down One pair bred, but was not successful.



Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce: 662 bp (2010 survey)

Coverage: moderate

Red

We received information on 345 monitored pairs, of which 269 were confirmed breeders that fledged a minimum of 432 young. There was a national survey of the Hen Harrier in 2010, and here Mark Eaton outlines the results.



Dan Powell

As a Red-listed species of high conservation concern, the Hen Harrier is surveyed in the UK and Isle of Man at six-yearly intervals as part of the SCARABBS programme. The RSPB, working with many Raptor Study Group volunteers, and with funding from the Countryside Commission for Wales, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage, organised the latest such survey, in 2010. This survey combined complete coverage of suitable breeding areas in most of the range with a sample-based approach in Scotland. Whereas the 2004 survey had found an increase in numbers (Sim *et al.* 2007), the 2010 survey found a significant decline, of 18%, since 2004. There was a mixed picture across the UK, with a continuation of the increase found in Wales in 2004, but declines elsewhere including a near-halving of the Isle of Man population. The English population remains perilously low and is restricted almost entirely to the Forest of Bowland where the RSPB/United Utilities *Birds of Bowland* project offers sanctuary from the persecution suffered elsewhere.

Data submitted directly to RBBP covered 100% of the population in England and the Isle of Man, 75% in Wales, 48% in Scotland and 88% in Northern Ireland. These percentages give some indication of the usual proportion of records normally covered by the annual RBBP reports.

Hen Harrier 2010 survey		
	Territorial pairs	Change since 2004 (%)
England	12	9.1
Wales	57	32.6
Scotland	505 (417–612)	-20.2
Northern Ireland	59	-6.3
Isle of Man	29	-49.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>662 (574–769)</b>	<b>-17.9</b>

Numbers in parentheses are 95% confidence limits; estimates given without CLs are from areas where complete coverage was achieved. Change figures are based on numbers of territorial pairs.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 16 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Amber

14 sites: 12–16 pairs fledged a minimum of 17 young. Since the late 1960s, most Montagu's Harrier nests have been in cereal crops (Gibbons *et al.* 1993) and active measures are required to protect nests and young from farming operations. The occurrence of a breeding pair (for the second time in four years) and a single displaying male on northern moorland is interesting, as it was in such habitats that most of our Montagu's Harriers formerly nested (Sharrock 1976).

England, S

Five sites: five pairs bred, of which two pairs fledged five young, and two pairs possibly bred (one of these relates to a single male displaying and holding territory over a five-week period).

England, E

Lincolnshire Four sites: four pairs bred, of which two were successful, fledging four young. Norfolk Three sites: two pairs bred, both of which were successful, fledging six young, and one pair probably bred.

England, C

Derbyshire One site: a single adult male seen from 26th April to 23rd May, sky-dancing on occasions.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: one pair bred, hatching five eggs and fledging two young.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 432 bp

Coverage: high

Green

295–435 pairs. This species is well monitored in key counties (mainly through nest visits by licensed observers) but is easily overlooked and a small but unknown proportion of the population goes unrecorded each year.

Northern Goshawk			Lancashire & N Merseyside	0	2
	Confirmed	Total pairs	Northumberland	28	35
	breeding pairs		Yorkshire	5	37
England, SW	62	71	Wales	51	105
Avon	0	1	Breconshire	4	15
Devon	10	15	Caernarfonshire	1	1
Gloucestershire	28	28	Ceredigion	1	5
Hampshire	22	22	Denbigh & Flint	1	1
Somerset	0	3	East Glamorgan	4	7
Wiltshire	2	2	Gower	5	10
England, SE	2	5	Gwent	28	28
Buckinghamshire	0	1	Meirionnydd	0	2
Kent	0	1	Montgomeryshire	3	6
Surrey	1	1	Pembrokeshire	0	4
Sussex	1	2	Radnorshire	4	26
England, E	5	13	Scotland, S	47	49
Lincolnshire	0	1	Borders	26	27
Norfolk	2	8	Dumfries & Galloway	18	19
Suffolk	3	4	Lothian	1	1
England, C	38	45	South Strathclyde RSG	2	2
Derbyshire	18	22	Scotland, Mid	47	50
Herefordshire	6	6	Angus & Dundee	2	2
Nottinghamshire	2	4	North-east Scotland	44	47
Shropshire	12	12	Perth & Kinross	1	1
Staffordshire	0	1	Scotland, N & W	1	1
England, N	36	88	Highland	1	1
Cheshire & Wirral	0	1	Northern Ireland	6	8
Cleveland	0	1	Co. Antrim	5	6
Cumbria	3	6	Co. Down	1	2
Co. Durham	0	6	TOTALS	295	435



Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Scarce: 442 bp (2003 survey)

Coverage: moderate

Amber

Results of Golden Eagle monitoring by Scottish Raptor Study Groups and the Northern England Raptor Forum (Downing *et al.* 2011) are presented below. In Scotland, a total of 352 home ranges were checked, of which 269 were occupied by pairs and 36 by single birds only. This compares with the population of 442 pairs estimated after the 2003 national survey (Eaton *et al.* 2007b). Of 252 nests monitored in Scotland, the mean number of young fledged per nest was 0.56, the highest since 2004 (Etheridge *et al.* 2012).

Golden Eagle	Singles <sup>1</sup>	Probable breeding pairs <sup>2</sup>	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs	Min. no. young fledged
England, N & Scotland, S	2	1	1	2	1
Angus & Dundee	0	2	8	10	12
Central Scotland RSG	0	4	6	10	2
North-east Scotland RSG	2	8	7	15	10
Perth & Kinross	1	8	8	16	5
Argyll	6	7	39	46	27
Highland	26	45	74	119	64
Outer Hebrides (Lewis & Harris)	0	11	27	38	11
Outer Hebrides (Uists)	0	2	11	13	8
TOTALS	37	88	181	269	140

<sup>1</sup> Total includes home ranges occupied by single birds or showing signs of occupation but no pair seen.  
<sup>2</sup> May include some pairs that laid eggs but failed early, and pairs on territory that were not fully monitored, so evidence of egg-laying was not available.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Rare: 5-yr mean 183 bp

Coverage: moderate

Amber

181–211 pairs. Nine pairs nesting in England is a new record and this is accompanied by increasing numbers of summering birds in England, Wales and southern Scotland. Our efforts to provide an accurate total of the number of pairs across the UK are confounded by the fact that not all pairs are counted in the Scottish strongholds (mainly Highland, Moray & Nairn and Perth & Kinross), and because some data on pairs that have been monitored still do not reach the Panel. We believe that all the known pairs of Ospreys in all other counties are monitored and reported, so it seems likely that the number of breeding pairs each year is now over 200 and perhaps as high as 250.

England, C  
Leicestershire & Rutland Four pairs bred.  
England, N  
Cumbria Two pairs bred, one of which fledged two young. Northumberland One pair bred, fledging three young, one pair built a nest but did not lay, and one pair present at a third site.  
England, elsewhere  
Two pairs bred.  
Wales  
Meirionnydd One pair bred, fledging three young, and one pair present at a second site.  
Scotland, S & Mid  
Angus & Dundee One pair bred, fledging two young. Borders Nine pairs bred, fledging 18 young, and one other territorial pair. Central Scotland RSG 18 pairs bred, fledging 38 young, and at least six other territorial pairs. Dumfries & Galloway Four pairs bred, fledging 12 young, and four other territorial pairs. Moray & Nairn One pair bred: this was the only information received. North-east Scotland 19 pairs bred, fledging 35 young, and four other territorial pairs. Perth & Kinross 44 pairs bred, fledging 65 young. South Strathclyde

RSG One pair bred, fledging three young, and one other territorial pair.  
Scotland, N & W  
Argyll RSG 16 pairs bred, fledging 30 young, and four other territorial pairs. Highland RSG 58 pairs bred, fledging 106 young, and at least seven other territorial pairs.

**Merlin *Falco columbarius***  
**Less scarce: 1,160 bp (2008 survey)**      **Coverage: moderate**

Amber

262–341 pairs monitored.

Merlin			Scotland, S	23	36
	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories occupied by pairs	Borders	3	7
			Dumfries & Galloway RSG	4	8
			Lothian	6	6
England, SW	1	1	South Strathclyde RSG	10	15
Devon	1	1	Scotland, Mid	73	77
England, C	12	14	Angus & Dundee	16	17
Derbyshire	10	12	Moray & Nairn	11	11
Shropshire	1	1	North-east Scotland	28	31
Staffordshire	1	1	Perth & Kinross	17	17
England, N	86	109	Upper Forth	1	1
Cumbria	7	7	Scotland, N & W	52	79
Co. Durham	28	30	Argyll	1	2
Lancashire & N Merseyside	8	11	Highland RSG	20	35
Northumberland	18	23	Orkney	9	14
Yorkshire	25	38	Outer Hebrides		
Wales	14	22	(Lewis & Harris only)	6	10
Breconshire	2	4	Shetland	16	18
Ceredigion	1	1	Northern Ireland	1	3
Denbigh & Flint	2	2	Co. Antrim	0	1
Meirionnydd	2	2	Co. Derry	1	1
Montgomeryshire	4	4	Co. Down	0	1
Radnorshire	3	9	TOTALS	262	341



Steve McQueen



Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,017 bp

Coverage: moderate



307–989 pairs. Clements (2001) estimated that the UK population is in the order of 2,200 breeding pairs, so these totals probably represent less than half the number of breeding Hobbies in the UK. Most counties continue to provide information based on known breeding sites rather than reviewing the year’s observations against the guidelines given on the RBBP website ([www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/sp\\_guidelines\\_hobby.pdf](http://www.rbbp.org.uk/downloads/sp_guidelines_hobby.pdf)). These offer a standard methodology for translating observations into numbers of pairs for submission to the Panel. The Lincolnshire total is an estimate based on data from Bird Atlas 2007–11.

Formerly rare, but now widespread in farmland in lowland England, Hobbies are secretive and breed later than most other species – and both of these factors lead to under-recording. Hardey *et al.* (2009) recommended that intensive searches for nests are best carried out when young are likely to have hatched, owing to the risk of nest predation and abandonment during incubation. This means the period between early July and mid August, when rather few birdwatchers are active in farmland areas. Fledging success can be measured from mid August onwards. We encourage more fieldwork on this species at this time of year, but remind observers that a Schedule 1 licence is required if nests are to be visited or if any other observation required for monitoring might cause disturbance of the nesting pair.

Hobby	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
			England, C	74	178
			Derbyshire	38	38
England, SW	69	184	Herefordshire	4	4
Avon	1	6	Leicestershire & Rutland	0	11
Cornwall	0	6	Nottinghamshire	10	15
Devon	13	17	Shropshire	9	47
Dorset	2	2	Staffordshire	2	16
Gloucestershire	10	14	Warwickshire	6	42
Hampshire	12	35	Worcestershire	5	5
Isle of Wight	0	1	England, N	29	113
Somerset	11	35	Cheshire & Wirral	16	42
Wiltshire	20	68	Co. Durham	1	1
England, SE	72	250	Greater Manchester	2	11
Bedfordshire	12	46	Lancashire & N Merseyside	2	18
Berkshire	3	4	Yorkshire	8	41
Buckinghamshire	2	17	Wales	9	35
Essex	1	5	Breconshire	0	7
Greater London	8	10	Carmarthenshire	2	2
Hertfordshire	0	50	Ceredigion	0	1
Kent	26	45	Denbigh & Flint	0	1
Oxfordshire	10	20	East Glamorgan	0	2
Surrey	8	11	Gower	0	1
Sussex	2	42	Gwent	3	3
England, E	53	228	Meirionnydd	1	2
Cambridgeshire	16	21	Montgomeryshire	0	7
Lincolnshire	0	(100)	Radnorshire	3	9
Norfolk	11	23	Scotland, N & W	1	1
Northamptonshire	10	10	Highland	1	1
Suffolk	16	74	TOTALS	307	989

Raymond King



209. A Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* family, East Glamorgan, June 2010.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Less scarce: 1,530 pairs (2002 survey) Coverage: moderate

Green

834–1,105 pairs. Although the numbers presented here are inevitably samples, particularly from the north of the UK, the trend for increasing numbers in counties in the south and east of England continues. Comments from many raptor workers, particularly in the north of England (Downing *et al.* 2011), refer to losses of clutches and young before fledging as a result of human disturbance.

Peregrine Falcon	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories occupied by pairs	England, E	11	19
			Cambridgeshire	2	2
			Lincolnshire	7	13
England, SW	118	200	Norfolk	1	2
Avon	13	13	Suffolk	1	2
Cornwall	31	37	England, C	79	85
Devon	13	75	Derbyshire	24	25
Dorset	28	28	Herefordshire	1	1
Gloucestershire	7	10	Leicestershire & Rutland	10	11
Hampshire	7	7	Nottinghamshire	7	7
Isle of Wight	10	10	Shropshire	20	20
Isles of Scilly	0	1	Staffordshire	7	7
Somerset	6	16	Warwickshire	3	5
Wiltshire	3	3	West Midlands	4	4
England, SE	58	75	Worcestershire	3	5
Bedfordshire	2	2	England, N	164	202
Berkshire	2	2	Cheshire & Wirral	6	7
Buckinghamshire	0	1	Cleveland	3	5
Essex	0	3	Cumbria	54	70
Greater London	8	17	Co. Durham	6	8
Kent	11	15	Greater Manchester	8	8
Oxfordshire	4	4	Lancashire & N Merseyside	24	24
Surrey	7	7	Northumberland	20	24
Sussex	24	24	Yorkshire	43	56



Peregrine Falcon cont.	Confirmed breeding pairs	Territories occupied by pairs	Lothian & Borders RSG	54	58
			South Strathclyde RSG	25	26
			Scotland, Mid	65	83
Wales	114	158	Angus & Dundee	12	22
Anglesey	8	9	Central Scotland RSG	18	23
Breconshire	10	16	Fife	1	2
Caernarfonshire	3	6	Isle of May	1	1
Carmarthenshire	6	6	North-east Scotland	5	7
Ceredigion	4	4	Perth & Kinross	28	28
Denbigh & Flint	12	12	Scotland, N & W	49	63
East Glamorgan	19	33	Argyll	18	24
Gower	5	5	Fair Isle	0	1
Gwent	4	4	Highland RSG	19	21
Meirionnydd	3	4	Orkney	8	11
Montgomeryshire	2	6	Outer Hebrides	3	5
Pembrokeshire	29	40	Shetland	1	1
Radnorshire	9	13	Northern Ireland	45	74
Scotland, S	124	137	Isle of Man	7	9
Dumfries & Galloway RSG	45	53	TOTALS	834	1,105

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean: 1,092 bp\*

Coverage: moderate



\* 1988–91 estimate was 3,000–6,000 bp.

371 sites: a minimum of 1,032 territories; 147 pairs confirmed breeding. Water Rails are likely to be under-recorded in many counties. Some recorders have submitted likely county totals in addition to the sometimes limited counts available in any particular season, which are summarised on the RBBP website.

Water Rail	Sites	Territories	Lincolnshire	5	7
			Norfolk	10	25
England, SW	43	105	Northamptonshire	3	3
Avon	2	5	Suffolk	21	236
Cornwall	2	2	England, C	26	57
Devon	5	7	Derbyshire	2	5
Dorset	7	8	Leicestershire & Rutland	3	3
Gloucestershire	3	3	Nottinghamshire	2	7
Hampshire	12	24	Shropshire	4	4
Isle of Wight	1	2	Staffordshire	4	19
Isles of Scilly	2	2	Warwickshire	5	7
Somerset	8	51	West Midlands	1	1
Wiltshire	1	1	Worcestershire	5	11
England, SE	56	112	England, N	79	257
Bedfordshire	3	3	Cheshire & Wirral	9	15
Berkshire	2	2	Cleveland	4	4
Essex	15	26	Cumbria	5	5
Hertfordshire	5	9	Co. Durham	5	5
Kent	16	49	Greater Manchester	17	19
Oxfordshire	1	5	Lancashire & N Merseyside	4	110
Surrey	8	12	Northumberland	11	11
Sussex	6	6	Yorkshire	24	88
England, E	48	296	Wales	37	86
Cambridgeshire	9	25	Anglesey	4	33

Water Rail <i>cont.</i>	Sites	Territories	Lothian	2	2
Breconshire	2	2	Scotland, Mid	24	42
Caernarfonshire	2	3	Angus & Dundee	3	15
Carmarthenshire	3	3	Fife	2	2
Ceredigion	3	6	Moray & Nairn	6	6
Denbigh & Flint	2	3	North-east Scotland	8	14
East Glamorgan	2	2	Perth & Kinross	5	5
Gower	3	6	Scotland, N & W	22	32
Gwent	1	8	Argyll	6	14
Montgomeryshire	1	1	Caithness	1	1
Pembrokeshire	3	5	Highland	7	7
Radnorshire	11	14	Orkney	5	7
Scotland, S	34	42	Outer Hebrides	2	2
Ayrshire	5	7	Shetland	1	1
Borders	9	11	Northern Ireland	2	3
Clyde	12	14	Co. Down	1	2
Clyde Islands	1	1	Co. Fermanagh	1	1
Dumfries & Galloway	5	7	TOTALS	371	1,032

**Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana***

**Rare: 5-yr mean 33 singing males**

**Coverage: moderate**



14 sites: 0–22 pairs/singing males. Stroud *et al.* (2012) showed that, in most years, not all breeding-season records of this species are submitted to the Panel. Using their updated figures gives a revised 5-year mean of 33 singing males. It remains to be seen whether there are more records for 2010 to be incorporated into the review presented here. A national survey of Spotted Crakes in spring 2012 has used RBBP data to help direct fieldwork effort. This survey will provide a more up-to-date and complete population estimate.

England, SW

Somerset Two sites: two singing males in June, while a juvenile in August and September at the same site where a juvenile was recorded in 2009 had perhaps fledged there.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) at least one (and possibly as many as three) singing males from 22nd April to 15th June; (2) up to three singing males from 22nd April to 6th May.

England, N

Yorkshire Two sites: (1) extensive site with five singing males; (2) one singing male on 12th and 27th June.

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one singing male on 28th May.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Two sites: three singing males heard in June. Highland Two sites: (1) two singing males on 11th May; (2) one singing male on 11th May. Orkney One site: one singing male on 20th May. Outer Hebrides One site: one singing male on 3rd June. Shetland One site: one singing male, heard on 27th June only.

**Corn Crane *Crex crex***

**Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,213 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**



1,246 singing males. A national survey of Corn Crakes in 2009 revealed 1,167 singing males but numbers in 2010 were slightly higher, even though coverage may have been less complete. Numbers are more or less stable across Argyll and the Outer Hebrides; the main increases were in Highland (especially mainland, with 21 singing males, and Skye, with 27) and Orkney.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One extensive site (Nene Washes): 21 singing males.



England, C

Derbyshire One site: one singing male on 10th–11th July.

England, N

Yorkshire Two sites: (1) one extensive site held three singing males; (2) one singing male for at least two days in July.

Scotland, S

Ayrshire One site: one singing male on 30th May only.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland Two sites: (1) one singing male 17th May to 5th June; (2) one singing male 12th–16th June. It is possible that these two records may relate to the same bird.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll Total 713: Coll 116, Colonsay 57, Iona 34, Islay 81, Mull 7, Oronsay 25, Staffa 1, Tiree 391, Treshnish Isles 1. Highland Total 49: Mainland 21, Muck 1, Skye 27. Orkney Total 39. Outer Hebrides Total 415: Barra 70, Benbecula 22, Berneray 6, Harris 2, Lewis 106, North Uist 107, South Uist 92, Vatersay 10. Shetland Total 0.

Northern Ireland

Co. Down One site: one singing male, 11th–13th August.

### Common Crane *Grus grus*

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 14 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

**Amber**

Seven sites: 13–15 pairs. Eight young fledged. Non-breeding pairs are not included in these totals but there has been an increase in records of such pairs wandering over large areas away from the centres of the breeding population in the Norfolk Broads, the East Anglian Fens and Yorkshire.

The Great Crane Project began in 2010; this project, based in Somerset, aims to help secure the future of Common Cranes in the UK by releasing about 20 birds in each of the years between 2010 and 2015.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one pair bred and fledged one young. Norfolk One extensive site (Norfolk Broads): nine pairs bred, with six successful pairs fledging six young, and one pair possibly bred. There was also one other, non-breeding pair. Suffolk One site: two pairs bred; one pair fledged one young.

England, N

Yorkshire Two extensive sites: one pair bred, fledging one young, one pair possibly bred and there were also two non-breeding pairs.

UK, elsewhere

Two sites in two counties, involving two non-breeding pairs in potential breeding habitat, each ranging widely.

### Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

**Reintroduced population first bred in 2008**

One extensive site: four pairs bred.

England, SW

Wiltshire One site: four chicks hatched from four nests.

### Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

**Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,545 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

**Amber**

At least 95 sites: 1,629 pairs. Avocets continue to expand to new sites, many within the counties of southeast and eastern England. Five years ago the species bred at 66 sites; now we have a situation where, as for the Little Egret, not all colonies are being counted each year, reducing the accuracy of this annual assessment of the Avocet population. We strongly encourage the counting of all colonies each year, and accurate six-figure grid references are essential to help separate duplicate counts.

In addition to the records included in the table, prospecting pairs (sometimes with nest-building and copulation behaviour observed) were recorded at other sites in Cheshire & Wirral, and in Gloucestershire, Leicestershire & Rutland and Shropshire, indicating potential future expansions into more inland sites.

Roger Tidman



210. Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Norfolk, April 2010. Avocets continue to expand into new breeding sites and over 1,600 pairs now nest in England and Wales.

Avocet	No. sites	Confirmed breeding pairs	Suffolk	10	229
			England, C	4	7
			Nottinghamshire	2	2
England, SW	3	26	Worcestershire	2	5
Hampshire	3	26	England, N	14	121
England, SE	21	352	Cheshire & Wirral	1	1
Essex	7	108	Cleveland	1	15
Kent	9	196	Co. Durham	1	1
Sussex	5	48	Lancashire & N Merseyside	6	62
England, E	52	1,100	Yorkshire	5	42
Cambridgeshire	5	50	Wales	1	23
Lincolnshire	15	381	Gwent	1	23
Norfolk	22	440	TOTALS	95	1,629

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 355 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Amber

Eight counties: 375 confirmed breeding pairs fledged 240 young.

Stone-curlew	Confirmed breeding pairs	Young fledged	Oxfordshire	4	2
			Sussex	2	2
England, SW	122	85	England, E	235	141
Hampshire	27	18	Cambridgeshire	2	4
Wiltshire	95	67	Norfolk	119	66
England, SE	18	14	Suffolk	114	71
Berkshire	12	10	TOTALS	375	240



Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 704 bp

Coverage: moderate

Green

703 pairs. Numbers reported each year reflect local coverage and not all sites are monitored. The total here is about 78% of the most recent estimate of 901 pairs found in the last national survey of 2007 (report in prep.).

Carmarthenshire again posts the highest county total; here Little Ringed Plovers nest on river shingles and 75 pairs were found on the rivers Tywi, Cothi and Brân. The Tywi is the only Site of Special Scientific Interest scheduled for this species, and in 2010 held about 8% of the UK population.

Little Ringed Plover		Staffordshire	35
	Confirmed and probable	Warwickshire	15
	breeding pairs	West Midlands	6
England, SW	59	Worcestershire	15
Avon	1	England, N	179
Devon	2	Cheshire & Wirral	20
Dorset	3	Cleveland	6
Gloucestershire	8	Cumbria	2
Hampshire	31	Co. Durham	3
Somerset	5	Greater Manchester	43
Wiltshire	9	Lancashire & N Merseyside	30
England, SE	104	Northumberland	8
Bedfordshire	6	Yorkshire	67
Berkshire	20	Wales	112
Buckinghamshire	9	Breconshire	7
Essex	12	Carmarthenshire	75
Greater London	6	Ceredigion	3
Hertfordshire	3	East Glamorgan	6
Kent	15	Gower	1
Oxfordshire	14	Gwent	5
Surrey	8	Meirionnydd	4
Sussex	11	Montgomeryshire	6
England, E	68	Radnorshire	5
Cambridgeshire	12	Scotland, S	6
Lincolnshire	31	Ayrshire	1
Norfolk	18	Borders	2
Northamptonshire	2	Clyde	2
Suffolk	5	Lothian	1
England, C	166	Scotland, Mid	9
Derbyshire	38	Angus & Dundee	2
Herefordshire	3	Fife	3
Leicestershire & Rutland	21	Moray & Nairn	1
Nottinghamshire	22	North-east Scotland	2
Shropshire	11	Upper Forth	1
		TOTAL	703

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Scarce: 510–750 bp (1999 survey)

Coverage: low

Amber

In 2010, data were received relating to 42 breeding pairs nesting within the main Scottish range, with records from mountain ranges in Angus & Dundee, Clyde Islands, Highland and North-east Scotland. A significant proportion of these records came from a small team of licensed field-workers checking the high tops for this species, but this is only a fraction of the total population.

The population estimate will be updated following the census of this and other montane species in 2011. In northern England, a displaying pair was recorded on 28th May, but the birds were not seen during a follow-up visit on 16th June, despite extensive searching.

### Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 1 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Amber

One site: two pairs. This small and vulnerable population hangs on – just – but observations of chicks provided confirmation of breeding for the second year running. Four potentially suitable sites, which have recorded Purple Sandpipers in the past, were also checked (under licence) but none held breeding birds in 2010.

Scotland, N & W/Mid

One site: two pairs bred.

### Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 11 females

Coverage: high

Red

Three sites: up to eight females. Once more, hints of potential breeding but no evidence of any sustained attempt, and it is four years since the last confirmed breeding, in Lancashire & N Merseyside.

England, E

Lincolnshire One site: lekking observed on several occasions with a male mating with at least two females, all three remaining on site into June.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: a total of 17 males and six females were present at leks in April and May and two males summered, but there was no evidence of breeding.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides One site: two males were seen lekking on 10th June, while on 16th June one of them was seen displaying to a female Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (!), but no females were recorded.

### Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Rare: 5-yr mean 66 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Red

16 sites: 57–67 pairs. The numbers of nominate *limosa* remain steady, with the majority breeding at the Ouse Washes. The number of confirmed breeding pairs of *L. l. islandica* (five), however, is lower than it has been since 2005.

#### *L. l. limosa* 52–59 pairs

England, SW

One site: one pair bred, but is believed to have failed at the egg or small chick stage.

England, SE

Kent Three sites: (1) one pair bred, raising one young, one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred; (2) one pair probably bred, but no more than display and copulation seen; (3) one pair probably bred, based on agitated behaviour in mid July.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: 44 pairs bred and a total of 25 young fledged. Norfolk One site: four pairs bred, at least two broods of fledged young seen. Suffolk One extensive site: a single displaying male, present for the thirteenth consecutive spring, was seen at three coastal locations.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: one pair probably bred. Two males and a female were again seen displaying early in the season but no nesting took place. Yorkshire Two sites: (1) one pair bred. Four eggs were laid but lost to a predator; (2) one pair bred. A female with four newly hatched chicks was seen on 21st May. A male, caught and ringed on 29th April was of the race *islandica* (ID supported by biometrics), but it is not certain that the breeding pair was of this race.



***L. l. islandica* 5–8 pairs**

Scotland, N & W

Orkney Two sites: (1) two pairs bred; (2) one pair probably bred. Shetland Four sites: three pairs bred, fledging at least one young, and two pairs probably bred.

**Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus***

**Scarce: 300+ bp (2009 partial survey) Coverage: low**

**Red**

40–60 apparently occupied territories (AOTs). The numbers reported here are a typical sample based on more limited fieldwork than the 2009 survey (Jackson 2009).

Scotland, N & W

Caithness One extensive site: two AOTs. Orkney One site: four pairs bred. Outer Hebrides North Uist: one pair probably bred; Lewis: no information. Shetland Data from three islands totalled 53 AOTs including 36 nests.



Jim Wood

**211.** Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Shetland, June 2010. The majority of the UK's Whimbrels nest in Shetland although only a fraction of the total population is monitored each year.

**Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus***

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 3 bp**

**Coverage: high**

**Amber**

One site: 0–3 pairs. Three pairs were also reported in 2009. Licensed fieldworkers take care to minimise disturbance while checking the afforested areas where Green Sandpipers breed and the primary aim is to ascertain the number of pairs present each year rather than to confirm breeding.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One extensive site: three pairs probably bred.

### Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

**Less scarce: 1,080 bp (1995 survey)**

**Coverage: low**

**Green**

Data were received for a minimum of 279 pairs (with at least 38 pairs confirmed breeding). Records came from four recording areas: Argyll (6), Caithness (63), Highland (171) and the Outer Hebrides (39). The impact of continuing fieldwork for Bird Atlas 2007–11 is clear, since this is by far the highest number reported in a single year to the Panel. However, to improve the monitoring of annual variation, we need volunteers to count the number of occupied territories in separate, defined areas in different parts of the range.

Breeding Greenshanks are most closely associated with areas of high rainfall and poorly drained, acidic, peaty soils (Forrester *et al.* 2007). Many of these areas are remote and visited infrequently by birdwatchers. However, once the young have hatched, the adults are very demonstrative in defence of their brood and observation of these distraction displays is the best way to provide proof of breeding without the need to locate nests or chicks. Such breeding pairs are most detectable during the first three weeks of June (Gilbert *et al.* 1998).

### Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 20 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

**Amber**

At least 11 sites: 4–27 pairs. The main sites in Highland are covered regularly, but other sites are reported upon only occasionally (for example, there was no information from Perth & Kinross in 2010). Nonetheless, 27 pairs equals the highest-ever figure reported, matching that in the last national survey, in 2007.

Scotland, N & W

Caithness One site: two pairs bred and one pair probably bred. Highland At least ten sites: two pairs bred, 21 pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred.

### Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 24 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

**Red**

15 sites: 19–27 breeding males. Unusually, 2010 saw records from three areas that do not normally hold breeding phalaropes, although the Highland record was of a single bird only. The most recent indication of breeding activity in Argyll was in 1999 and 2000. The pair in North-east Scotland was at a temporarily flooded inland site, recalling the breeding pair in Highland between 1977 and 1984, and was the first potential breeding record for the recording area.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: one male probably bred. A female was seen over a 12-day period in late May/early June, and a male was present for at least a week later in June. Although the two were not seen together, the behaviour of the male suggested that a breeding attempt may have occurred.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one male probably bred, though the breeding attempt may have failed due to flooding; three females present. Highland One site: one female present, possible breeding only. Outer Hebrides Two sites: three breeding males, plus two males probably bred; six females recorded. Shetland Ten sites: 16 males bred and three other males probably bred. A total of 28 females was recorded.

### Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

**Scarce: 2,136 bp (Seabird 2000)**

**Coverage: moderate**

**Red**

557 apparently occupied territories. The Arctic Skua was added to the list of species covered by the RBBP with effect from the 2010 season owing to the steep decline in its breeding population, which led to it being Red-listed by the most recent Birds of Conservation Concern assessment (Eaton *et al.* 2009). The population was estimated at 2,136 apparently occupied territories (AOTs) by Seabird 2000 (Mitchell *et al.* 2004). Other than on Fair Isle and in Orkney, no special





Roger Riddington

**212.** Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*, Shetland, June 2010. Dramatic declines in the numbers of breeding Arctic Skuas in the last 10–20 years have led to the species being Red-listed, and now added to the RBBP list.

effort was made to count this species in 2010, so the data here are rather limited, but lay the foundations for future annual assessments. Concern over the plight of the 'Skootie Alan' (the Shetland name for Arctic Skua) has led to a call for all breeding records to be collected in Shetland in 2012, and we would echo that plea across the entire UK breeding range.

In Orkney, funding was available for a census of both Arctic and Great Skuas *S. skua* in 2010 and almost all islands were surveyed (Meek 2011). The Arctic Skua population had fallen to 376 AOTs, compared with a total of 720 in Seabird 2000 (a 48% decline) and a peak of 1,043 in 1992. On Hoy, the population crashed, falling from 406 AOTs in 1982 to just 12 in 2010. The driver behind these declines seems to be food shortages, as witnessed by the declines in numbers of breeding Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* and Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* in the Northern Isles. Arctic Skuas depend to a large extent on stealing prey from these two species, so their predicament has translated into problems for the skua. However, an analysis of the numbers across the last 30 years shows that much of the decline occurred before the reduction in food supplies, and it is thought that the initial drop in numbers was caused by predation pressure (mainly on newly fledged Arctic Skua chicks) from an increasing Great Skua population. This is demonstrated by a move of Arctic Skuas from the former strongholds on Hoy to other islands in Orkney. Great Skua numbers were bouyant because of the availability of easy food in the form of fishing-boat discards, but discards have become less available and the Great Skuas have had to look for alternative prey. The impact of these combined problems for Arctic Skuas can be seen in the low productivity also witnessed on Fair Isle.

#### Scotland, N & W

Caithness Limited data received, all from Atlas fieldwork, but at least two pairs bred and three pairs probably bred. Fair Isle After recent declines, the population recovered somewhat to 70 AOTs, but only 11 chicks fledged and many, perhaps all, of these were taken by Great Skuas after fledging. Orkney A county-wide survey revealed 376 AOTs. Outer Hebrides Limited data, mainly from Atlas fieldwork, provided evidence of just three confirmed breeding pairs with a minimum of a further 26 AOTs recorded. Shetland Limited data included evidence of 50 confirmed breeding pairs and a further 27 AOTs. This total includes 50 pairs on Foula, of which 39 laid eggs.

Roger Riddington



213. Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Shetland, June 2010.

**Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus***

**Potential breeder**

One site: one bird. Records of Long-tailed Skua in breeding habitat have not previously been submitted to the RBBP, although there have been a number of potential breeding records in Scotland, which are summarised in Forrester *et al.* (2007). The most significant was a confirmed breeding pair in Angus & Dundee in 1980 (McLeod 2005), which held territory, dive-bombed intruders and laid a clutch of eggs on a coastal moor. The eggs were predated. In 1981 a single bird, presumably one of the pair, returned.

Scotland, N & W

Shetland One site: one adult held territory from 27th May to 17th July, though more erratically in the last month of its stay. The bird may well have been in the same area in 2009 also.

**Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus***

**Scarce: 5-yr mean 645 bp**

**Coverage: high**

**Amber**

34 sites: 1,016–1,034 pairs. This is another record total, and the extraordinary rate of increase of breeding Mediterranean Gulls continues – the total of 573 confirmed breeding pairs in 2009 was, at that point, the highest ever. Some colony counts are estimated minima, owing to the large numbers involved, but this means that the total of 1,016 confirmed breeding pairs is a minimum figure.

The number of sites is lower than in 2009, so the increase has come about mainly through expansion at the three main colonies: one in Hampshire (400 nests in 2010, 137 in 2009), one in Kent (225, 137) and one in Sussex (176, 73). Yorkshire had its first confirmed breeding record, and the nest in Anglesey was the first confirmed breeding record for north Wales, following the first for Wales in 2009, in Carmarthenshire.



England, SW

Dorset One site: breeding birds not counted but estimated to be at least 80 pairs. Gloucestershire One site: one pair displaying and mating. Hampshire Three sites: (1) 400 pairs at Langstone Harbour fledged 218 young; (2) 19 pairs bred though only five are thought to have been successful; (3) five pairs bred, no information on productivity. Isle of Wight One site: one pair possibly bred – a juvenile with two adults in late July may have fledged elsewhere.

England, SE

Essex Two sites: (1) four pairs bred; (2) one pair bred. Kent Four sites: (1) 225 pairs bred; (2) 50 pairs bred; (3) eight pairs bred; (4) five pairs bred, fledging six young. Oxfordshire One site: one pair bred and two young fledged; the first successful breeding in the county. Sussex Three sites: (1) 176 pairs bred with at least 74 young fledged; (2) three pairs possibly bred; (3) three pairs possibly bred.

England, E

Norfolk Three sites: (1) five pairs fledged at least 16 young; (2) four pairs bred; (3) at least two, probably three, pairs bred. Suffolk Two sites: (1) six pairs bred, but no young fledged; (2) three pairs bred, again no young fledged.

England, C

Staffordshire Two sites: (1) two pairs bred; (2) one pair bred.

England, N

Cheshire & Wirral One site: at least two pairs bred, one pair probably bred and one pair possibly bred. Cumbria One site: one pair bred, but no young were fledged. Lancashire & N Merseyside Two sites: (1) 11 pairs bred, fledging at least two young, and two pairs possibly bred; (2) one pair possibly bred. Northumberland One site: one pair bred, two young seen in the nest. Yorkshire Three sites: (1) one pair bred, fledging three young; (2) one pair probably bred; (3) one pair possibly bred.

Wales

Anglesey One site: one pair bred, fledging two young.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: two pairs bred and one pair probably bred; one large chick was almost ready to fledge in mid June. Co. Down One site: one pair probably bred.

In addition, there were summering or displaying birds at Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* colonies in Borders, Cheshire & Wirral, Cleveland, Greater Manchester, Leicestershire & Rutland and Lincolnshire (four sites).

### Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 5 bp

Coverage: near-complete

Amber

Six sites: 1–2 pairs plus 2–3 mixed pairs. Fifteen years after the first UK breeding record, in Dorset, the records in 2010 away from the southwest coast perhaps hint at some extension of breeding range, though most records still relate to mixed pairings.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one pair bred, hatching two chicks but fledging only one. Hampshire One site: one mixed pair bred; a Yellow-legged Gull paired with a Herring Gull *L. argentatus* fledged three hybrid young.

England, E

Cambridgeshire One site: one mixed pair possibly bred. A female was seen copulating with a Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* on 28th April but there was no further evidence of breeding. Norfolk One site: one mixed pair bred. The pair consisted of a pure Yellow-legged Gull paired with a hybrid Yellow-legged × Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Wales

Breconshire Two sites: (1) one adult, present from 16th March to 22nd April, was seen in courtship display with a Lesser Black-backed Gull, and two Yellow-legged Gulls were at this site on 22nd March; (2) two birds were present on 23rd April. It seems likely that the same individuals were involved, so these records are treated as one pair.

**Little Tern *Sternula albifrons***  
**Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,485 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

**Amber**

Minimum of 1,391 pairs at 54 colonies.

Little Tern	No. sites	Confirmed pairs	Min. young fledged
England, SW	4	101	72
Dorset	1	12	9
Hampshire	3	89	63
England, SE	6	77	32
Essex	3	64	25
Kent	1	2	0
Sussex	2	11	7
England, E	13	798	212
Lincolnshire	3	36	17
Norfolk	7	632	178
Suffolk	3	130	17
England, N	6	174	24
Cleveland	1	91	3
Cumbria	2	36	9
Northumberland	2	36	11
Yorkshire	1	11	1
Wales	1	114	216
Denbigh & Flint	1	114	216
Scotland, S	1	1	0
Lothian	1	1	0
Scotland, Mid	1	37	17
North-east Scotland	1	37	17
Scotland, N & W	21	80	29
Argyll	9	56	29
Highland	1	1+	n/a
Orkney	1	5	n/a
Outer Hebrides	10	18	n/a
Isle of Man	1	9	7
TOTALS	54	1,391	609

**Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii***  
**Rare: 5-yr mean 90 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

**Red**

Five sites: 83 pairs, and two mixed pairs. As in 2009, single Roseate Terns formed mixed pairs with Common Terns *S. hirundo* but, unlike in 2009, the total number of sites occupied fell back to more typical levels, and only the main colony in Northumberland held more than two pairs.

England, N

Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: one mixed pair bred. As in 2009, a Roseate Tern was paired with a Common Tern, but this time they were successful, fledging one young. Northumberland One site: Coquet Island: 80 pairs raised at least 64 large young.

Wales

Anglesey One site: one mixed pair bred. A Roseate Tern paired with a Common Tern laid one egg but it did not hatch.

Scotland, Mid

Fife One site: two pairs bred, but the nests were deserted at the egg stage.

Northern Ireland

Co. Antrim One site: one pair bred, but was unsuccessful.



Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Scarce/Less scarce: 1,100–3,600 bp \*

Coverage: unknown

Green

\* total for Britain, 1988–91 Atlas

206–304 pairs. Long-eared Owls are largely nocturnal and unobtrusive in their behaviour, and it is notoriously difficult to estimate their numbers; Gibbons *et al.* (1993) put the British population at 1,100–3,600 pairs, with a similar number in Ireland. Given the uncertainties over its current status, it was decided in 2011 to add Long-eared Owl to the RBBP list.

Many records of Long-eared Owls are the result of diligent searching or chance encounters, but territorial calls or the far-carrying ‘squeaking gate’ call of the young may be detected during night-time visits to suitable habitat. In Britain, most Long-eared Owls nest in conifer plantations or areas of scrub, but a common characteristic is the presence of areas of open ground (often rough grazing or moorland) close to the nesting area.

In Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man, but not in Britain, both Long-eared and Short-eared Owls are protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act; Long-eared Owls in particular are especially prone to desertion if disturbed when laying or with eggs or small young. Fieldworkers should consult Hardey *et al.* (2009) and the RBBP website for further guidelines.

For both species, the tables published here reflect casual recording only, since there was no time before the 2010 season to encourage observers to make a special effort. We ask birdwatchers to report all breeding-season records of both the *Asio* owls to enable us to say more about these two species. The review in the next RBBP report will benefit from the final results from Bird Atlas 2007–11. The table below shows that Long-eared Owls are widespread, though apparently

Long-eared Owl	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
			Northumberland	11	14
			Yorkshire	40	53
England, SW	9	17	Wales	7	20
Avon	2	2	Breconshire	1	1
Cornwall	1	3	Caernarfonshire	1	1
Hampshire	1	1	Denbigh & Flint	2	2
Isle of Wight	4	5	Gwent	0	8
Somerset	1	3	Radnorshire	3	8
Wiltshire	0	3	Scotland, S	19	26
England, SE	6	7	Ayrshire	1	1
Bedfordshire	1	1	Borders	7	11
Essex	2	2	Clyde	8	8
Kent	2	3	Clyde Islands	2	2
Oxfordshire	1	1	Dumfries & Galloway	0	2
England, E	16	38	Lothian	1	2
Cambridgeshire	5	6	Scotland, Mid	17	17
Lincolnshire	2	20	Angus & Dundee	2	2
Norfolk	3	6	Fife	2	2
Suffolk	6	6	Moray & Nairn	2	2
England, C	8	12	North-east Scotland	6	6
Derbyshire	5	6	Perth & Kinross	4	4
Shropshire	1	1	Upper Forth	1	1
Staffordshire	2	4	Scotland, N & W	16	19
Warwickshire	0	1	Argyll	0	3
England, N	94	134	Caithness	2	2
Cheshire & Wirral	2	3	Highland	12	12
Cleveland	2	4	Orkney	1	1
Cumbria	3	5	Outer Hebrides	1	1
Co. Durham	12	17	Northern Ireland	13	13
Greater Manchester	8	11	Isle of Man	1	1
Lancashire & N Merseyside	16	27	TOTALS	206	304

nowhere numerous. The higher totals in some counties of northern England reflect more intensive fieldwork by a small number of local enthusiasts.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Scarce/Less scarce: 1,000–3,500 bp \*      Coverage: unknown

Amber

\* total for Britain, 1988–91 Atlas

125–275 pairs. Short-eared Owls can be more conspicuous than Long-eared Owls, since they hunt in daylight, but their numbers are also difficult to ascertain and monitoring is further complicated by their nomadic habits. Numbers can vary widely between years depending on food availability, and it is thought that there are fewer breeding pairs now than 20 years ago. Short-eared Owls require extensive areas of open ground, be it moorlands, dunes or young forestry. Sharrock (1976) suggested that the breeding population could be as low as 1,000 pairs in years of poor vole numbers and Gibbons *et al.* (1993) suggested a range of 1,000–3,500 pairs.

The table shows that most records come from upland Scotland and northern England, where some raptor study groups monitor Short-eared Owls alongside other moorland raptors.

Short-eared Owl		Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
				Pembrokeshire	4	5
				Radnorshire	3	3
England, SE	0	1		Scotland, S	14	24
Berkshire	0	1		Ayrshire	2	3
England, E	1	2		Borders	7	15
Lincolnshire	1	2		Clyde	1	2
England, C	16	20		Clyde Islands	2	2
Derbyshire	7	11		Dumfries & Galloway	2	2
Staffordshire	9	9		Scotland, Mid	27	30
England, N	21	53		Angus & Dundee	1	1
Cheshire & Wirral	1	5		Moray & Nairn	0	1
Cumbria	1	12		Perth & Kinross	22	22
Co. Durham	1	4		Upper Forth	4	6
Greater Manchester	0	1		Scotland, N & W	39	133
Lancashire & N Merseyside	7	12		Argyll	7	13
Northumberland	2	3		Caithness	2	3
Yorkshire	9	16		Highland	8	10
Wales	7	12		Orkney	2	45
Caernarfonshire	0	1		Outer Hebrides	20	62
Meirionnydd	0	3		TOTALS	125	275



Alan Harris



**Wryneck *Jynx torquilla***

Very rare: 5-yr mean 2 bp

Coverage: moderate

Red

Two sites: 0–2 pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Two sites: one singing male recorded on three dates within a two-week period in mid May, and a second bird in suitable habitat in late June.

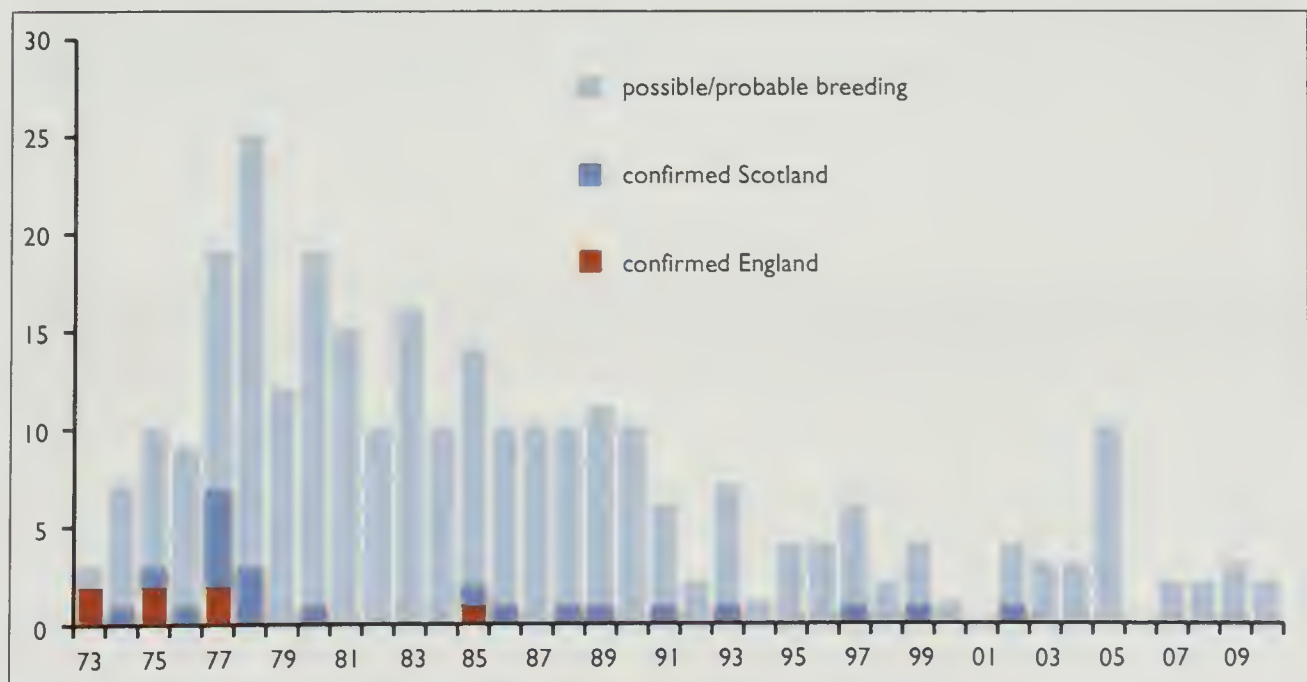
Stewart Taylor, recently retired from RSPB, where he worked for many years in the Scottish Highlands, mainly at Loch Garten and Abernethy, has compiled the following review of the status of the Wryneck during the twentieth century.

In the early 1800s it would have been possible to find Wrynecks breeding in almost every county of England and Wales but numbers declined steadily throughout the nineteenth century, at least partly reflecting a concomitant major intensification in land management. During that period the Wryneck had not been recorded breeding in Scotland.

The contraction of the Wryneck's UK breeding range began in the north in about 1830 and by 1905 it had been lost completely from Wales (Lovegrove *et al.* 1994). By the mid 1950s the species was confined to parts of central and southeast England: the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk, Suffolk, Surrey and Sussex (Monk 1963; Peal 1968). Kent, with its well-established large gardens, parkland and old orchards, was the most heavily populated county. Commons, heaths and open scrub were other favoured habitats, with established woodland being utilised less frequently, despite the need for nesting cavities. In 1954, the population was estimated to be 150–400 pairs, revised to 100–200 pairs by 1958 (Sharrock 1976). However, the Wryneck's rapid decline continued, with just 40–80 pairs in 1966 and none reported from England for the first time in 1974.

In Scotland, there seemed to be more positive news. Through the 1950s there were several reports of Wrynecks in song in the Highlands, particularly to the west of the Cairngorms. Monitoring birds at a few of these sites paid dividends and, in 1969, territorial birds at five sites produced the first breeding records (three) of Wrynecks in Scotland (Burton *et al.* 1970). One pair was nesting in a deep split in a Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and the others were in old woodpecker holes. These records, in the second year of the first national atlas, suggested that losses in England might be countered by the Wryneck getting a small toehold in Scotland.

During the 1970s, the Wryneck population in Scotland seemed to be becoming more secure;



**Fig. 3.** Breeding records of Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* in Scotland and England, 1973–2010.

Andrew Moon



**214.** Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Buckinghamshire, September 2010. This is a migrant bird but was photographed in Buckinghamshire, the county that held the last documented breeding pair in England, in 1985. Now Wrynecks occur as a potentially breeding species only in Scotland, but it is already a decade since the last confirmed breeding record there.

in 1977, seven pairs were confirmed breeding in the UK, five in Scotland and two in England, with an additional 12 birds heard singing. But since 1978, single breeding pairs have been confirmed on just ten occasions in Scotland, eight in Highland and two in North-east Scotland. The last confirmed breeding in England was in Buckinghamshire in 1985 and the last in Scotland in Ross-shire (Highland) in 2002, when a nest with young was found.

The bird's decline throughout its British and European range (PECBMS 2011) has not been fully explained, although suggested causes include pesticides reducing food supplies and habitat changes, such as the loss of open ground near potential nest-sites. There is the possibility that a few birds breed undetected each year. Unless the birds are located during a 2–3-week period of singing during mating and nest-prospecting (usually in late May in Scotland, earlier in England), they are very difficult to find. For example, I have heard birds singing in suitable breeding habitat on four occasions since 2001 yet in each case breeding was not proved.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor***

**Less scarce: 1,400–2,900 bp (Baker et al. 2006) Coverage: low**

Red

51–446 pairs. This is the species' first entry in this report, and all records of breeding evidence are now required to provide a minimum level of monitoring. Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers are now sufficiently scarce that they cannot be monitored effectively by the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). Smith & Charman (2012) described the recent history in the UK and elsewhere in Europe and suggested that the decline has been driven by food shortages.

The county totals below are based largely on casual records, but demonstrate the low levels of recording of this unobtrusive species. In Herefordshire, the 'Woodpeckers of Herefordshire' project has encouraged the recording of all three species of breeding woodpecker in the county



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker			England, C	17	100
			Derbyshire	1	8
	Confirmed	Total	Herefordshire	6	29
	breeding pairs	pairs	Leicestershire & Rutland	1	5
England, SW	3	93	Nottinghamshire	4	10
Avon	0	1	Shropshire	3	16
Cornwall	0	1	Staffordshire	0	8
Devon	0	16	Warwickshire	1	12
Dorset	0	6	West Midlands	1	1
Gloucestershire	0	19	Worcestershire	0	11
Hampshire	3	30	England, N	6	73
Somerset	0	15	Cheshire & Wirral	3	24
Wiltshire	0	5	Co. Durham	0	5
England, SE	14	87	Greater Manchester	0	6
Bedfordshire	1	3	Lancashire & N Merseyside	0	3
Berkshire	1	3	Yorkshire	3	35
Buckinghamshire	1	3	Wales	6	56
Greater London	2	4	Breconshire	1	4
Hertfordshire	2	4	Caernarfonshire	0	1
Kent	6	36	Carmarthenshire	1	7
Oxfordshire	0	5	Ceredigion	3	4
Surrey	1	7	Denbigh & Flint	0	10
Sussex	0	22	East Glamorgan	0	5
England, E	5	37	Gower	0	3
Cambridgeshire	1	9	Gwent	0	14
Lincolnshire	4	15	Meirionnydd	1	1
Norfolk	0	6	Pembrokeshire	0	2
Northamptonshire	0	3	Radnorshire	0	5
Suffolk	0	4	TOTALS	51	446

since 2004, and by 2010 had achieved sufficient coverage to log 29 pairs of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. This admirable effort has perhaps exaggerated the importance of central England for this species, for which the UK heartland is in southeast England; the Kent Ornithological Society, for instance, estimates that there are c. 100 pairs of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers in the county, although data for only 36 pairs were received in 2010.

**Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus***  
**Very rare: 5-yr mean 5 bp**  
**Coverage: near-complete**

Red

Three sites: 0–3 pairs. This is the first year since 1973, when the Panel began collecting records, that there were no confirmed breeding records of Golden Orioles in the UK. The extralimital records in Somerset and Dumfries & Galloway probably refer to stray migrants rather than genuine breeding attempts, although the possible occurrence of a pair in southern Scotland in both 2009 and 2010 (albeit at different sites) is intriguing.

- England, SW  
Somerset One site: a male was seen and heard on four occasions during 5th–11th June.
- England, E  
Suffolk One site: up to two males and one female from 28th April to 15th June; evidence of breeding was inconclusive. The Golden Oriole Group comments that a male and female were seen nest-building but the female was not seen again after this.
- Scotland, S  
Dumfries & Galloway One site: a male was seen on 5th June and a second bird may have been present.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Very rare: 5-yr mean 3 bp

Coverage: moderate

Red

Two sites: 3 pairs. The events of 2010 were sufficiently notable to make the national press: Red-backed Shrikes had not bred in England since the last remnants of the original southeast England population became extinct, in 1992.



Dan Powell

England, SW

Devon One site: two pairs bred. A round-the-clock protection scheme was co-ordinated by the RSPB with a number of local partners to combat the threat of known egg-collectors in the vicinity. The first nesting attempt by one pair failed because of predation but the second attempt was successful: three young fledged. Three young were also fledged by the second pair, at their first attempt.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one pair bred, fledging three young.

Mary Davies (RSPB) here summarises the status of Red-backed Shrikes in the UK since 1973.

Formerly widespread over much of England and Wales, the Red-backed Shrike decreased steadily as a breeding species after the middle of the nineteenth century, that trend accelerating

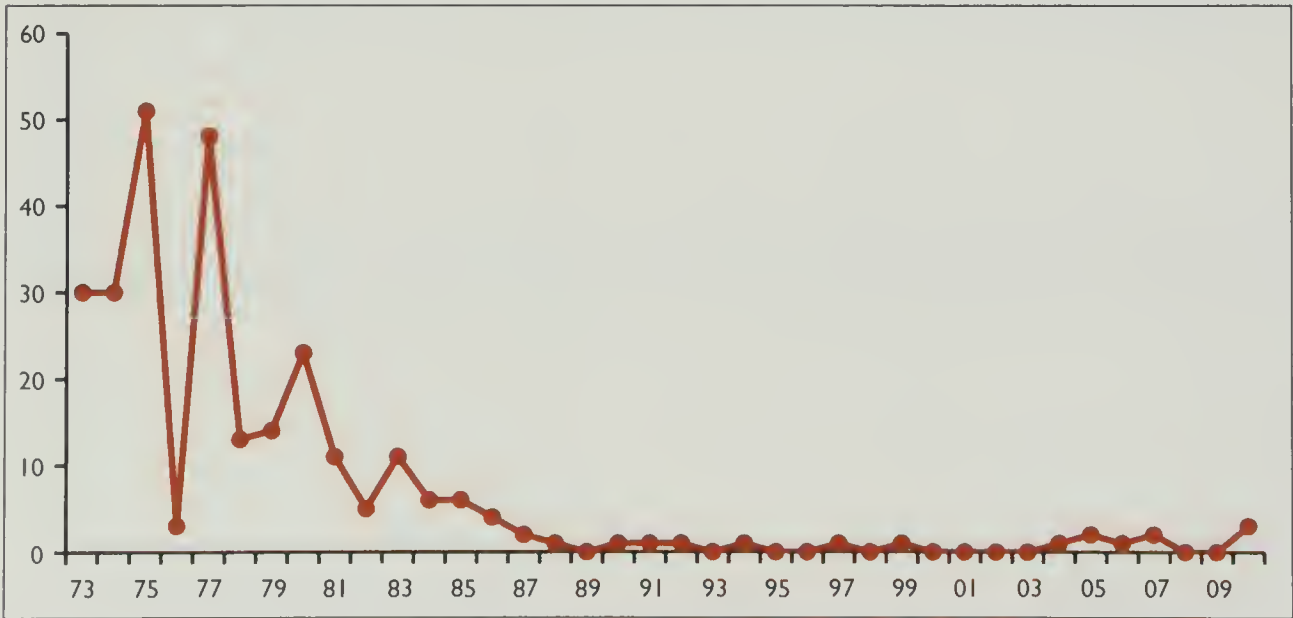


Fig. 4. Confirmed breeding pairs of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* in the UK, 1973–2010.



after 1945 as the range contracted southwards. A population of around 300 pairs in 1952 had dropped to 80–90 pairs by 1971 (Bibby 1973).

Confirmed breeding pairs in the UK since 1973 are shown in fig. 4. The data for the early 1970s are undoubtedly incomplete but it is clear that during the 1970s and early 1980s the UK Red-backed Shrike population declined to a critically low level. By 1985, only six pairs remained and the species was confined to East Anglia; rock bottom was reached in 1989 when there were no breeding records in the UK, although one pair bred again in East Anglia in both 1991 and 1992.

In a pattern that recalls that of the Wryneck (see above), up to eight pairs nested in Scotland during 1977–79 but that colonisation was not sustained. Single pairs have nested occasionally since and, during the last decade, breeding in Scotland occurred in 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2010. A pair bred successfully in Wales in 2005, and the pair returned to the same site in 2006 (when they were again successful) and 2007 (when they were not).

The detailed ecological requirements of Red-backed Shrikes in the UK are poorly known. Causes of the birds' decline are undoubtedly linked to a number of factors. Loss of breeding habitat has had an effect at a local level and, for birds nesting in loose colonies, relatively small-scale habitat loss could threaten the breeding of several pairs. In many places, Red-backed Shrikes were last known to nest in dry heaths with Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and Heather *Calluna vulgaris*. However, these habitats were potentially suboptimal and with most productive areas gradually being extinguished, such areas were unable to maintain self-sustaining populations (Brown & Grice 2005). Changes in food supply are now thought to be the single most significant factor in the decline of Red-backed Shrikes. Agricultural intensification (particularly the increased use of fertilisers and pesticides and the loss of field corners and hedgerows) has led to a great decline in the availability of large invertebrate prey.

It remains to be seen whether the events of 2010 can be sustained, but there have been recent population increases on the near continent; for example, Red-backed Shrikes have increased by over 5% per annum in the Netherlands since 2000. This species is one that attracts both birdwatchers and egg-collectors. The threat of the latter, and the potential for desertion caused by over-zealous birdwatchers and photographers means that special protection measures are required for nesting sites. Locations must therefore remain secret and it is recommended that birders refrain from visiting any sites unless public viewing facilities have been established.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 421 bp

Coverage: moderate



271–464 pairs. These figures are just a sample of the total population and include only monitored pairs (except for the Isle of Man). However, we understand that there was full coverage in Cornwall, north Wales, Pembrokeshire, Colonsay and Oronsay, and Northern Ireland.

Red-billed Chough	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs			
			Gower	5	8
			Meirionnydd	18	20
			Pembrokeshire	56	70
England, SW	3	6	Scotland	25	27
Cornwall	3	6	Argyll: Colonsay & Oronsay	12	14
Wales	214	270	Argyll: Islay	13	13
Anglesey	28	38	Northern Ireland	0	1
Caernarfonshire	82	98	Co. Antrim	0	1
Ceredigion	23	32	Isle of Man	29	(160)
Denbigh & Flint	1	3	TOTALS	271	464
East Glamorgan	1	1			

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Scarce: 5-yr mean 553 bp

Coverage: moderate

Amber

800 territories or singing males. This total is considerably higher than the previous maximum of 613 territories in 2007. This is despite coverage being less than complete in some counties (for instance the Hampshire population is estimated at 500 territories and, based on Atlas results and subsequent fieldwork, the Kent population is thought to be at least 75 territories, even though data on just two were submitted in 2010). Factoring in these figures gives a total of over 1,000 Firecrest territories. Recent surveys of the New Forest, Hampshire (Wynn *et al.* 2012), have shown a similar increase to the national figures of over 40% between 2009 and 2010. This is despite the severity of the winters of 2008/09 and 2009/10 in southern England.

Firecrest		Oxfordshire	4
	Singing males/ territories	Surrey	6
		Sussex	56
England, SW	417	England, E	158
Dorset	2	Cambridgeshire	1
Gloucestershire	4	Norfolk	116
Hampshire	348	Suffolk	41
Somerset	27	England, C	6
Wiltshire	36	Derbyshire	3
England, SE	212	Herefordshire	1
Bedfordshire	2	Warwickshire	2
Berkshire	94	Wales	7
Buckinghamshire	44	Gwent	2
Essex	1	Montgomeryshire	2
Hertfordshire	3	Radnorshire	3
Kent	2	TOTAL	800

Willow Tit *Poecile montana*

Less scarce: 8,500 bp (in 2000)

Coverage: moderate

Red

188–639 pairs. The Willow Tit has been Red-listed since 2002, owing to the long-term decline in its breeding population; the BBS trend (1995–2009) was down by 76% (Risely *et al.* 2011), one of the largest declines by any species reported over that period. The most recent population estimate for Willow Tit was 8,500 territories (Baker *et al.* 2006), although given the rate of decline this estimate is now clearly too high; Perrins (2003) reviewed the population trends of both Willow and Marsh Tits *P. palustris*. However, it is particularly difficult to get accurate population estimates for the Willow Tit: partly because of difficulties in separating it from the very similar Marsh Tit (e.g. Broughton 2009); partly because in some counties it is quite common and widespread (and typically under-recorded), yet in others it is extremely rare and may require a description for records to be accepted.

The RBBP viewed the possibility of adding the Willow Tit to the list of species we cover with some trepidation, but the available data told us that the species was now scarce enough to be added. We contacted county recorders to gauge reaction and were gratified to receive support from all areas, although several recorders from counties with higher populations made it clear that it would be difficult to provide meaningful returns annually. We asked for approximate county estimates too; combining these indicated a UK population of around 1,500 pairs, concentrated in parts of southwest Scotland, northern and central England, with the following counties apparently holding the largest populations: Dumfries & Galloway, Co. Durham, Yorkshire, Lancashire & N Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Cheshire & Wirral, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire & Rutland and Hampshire (these subjective estimates are not always borne out by the county totals below, which indicates the level of under-recording in some areas). The comments on local status received from county recorders have been very useful in establishing a baseline position





Mike Lane

215. Willow Tit *Poecile montana*, Staffordshire, November 2010. Willow Tit populations seem to be holding their own in some counties, while in others, where the species was formerly common, numbers have dwindled away so that it is now rare or even absent.

Willow Tit			West Midlands	0	1
	Confirmed	Total	Worcestershire	2	2
	breeding pairs	pairs	England, N	97	313
England, SW	6	56	Cheshire & Wirral	10	26
Cornwall	0	8	Cleveland	2	4
Devon	1	8	Cumbria	2	2
Gloucestershire	4	20	Co. Durham	18	52
Hampshire	0	15	Greater Manchester	16	68
Wiltshire	1	5	Lancashire & N Merseyside	9	9
England, SE	1	8	Northumberland	0	13
Berkshire	0	1	Yorkshire	40	139
Buckinghamshire	0	2	Wales	13	62
Oxfordshire	1	3	Breconshire	2	11
Sussex	0	2	Caernarfonshire	1	1
England, E	19	56	Carmarthenshire	0	3
Lincolnshire	15	41	Ceredigion	2	3
Norfolk	2	6	Denbigh & Flint	1	7
Northamptonshire	2	7	East Glamorgan	1	6
Suffolk	0	2	Gwent	0	2
England, C	50	134	Montgomeryshire	0	4
Derbyshire	8	21	Pembrokeshire	0	9
Leicestershire & Rutland	6	14	Radnorshire	6	16
Nottinghamshire	2	17	Scotland, N	2	10
Shropshire	3	24	Ayrshire	0	1
Staffordshire	8	26	Dumfries & Galloway	2	9
Warwickshire	21	29	TOTALS	188	639

from which we can better monitor this species.

Although no special effort was made to collect Willow Tit numbers in 2010, we hope that from now on we shall be able to provide at least minimum totals of the number of pairs recorded annually in each county. We should also be able to track the ebb and flow of range changes at the county level. We encourage all birdwatchers to record all Willow Tits in suitable habitat during the breeding season, and to submit their records to the county recorder, either directly or via BirdTrack.

**Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus***  
**Scarce: 5-yr mean 628 bp**

**Coverage: moderate**

Amber

At least 57 sites: a minimum of 718 pairs. This is the highest total reported to the Panel, suggesting that the cold winter of 2009/10 had little impact on breeding numbers – surprisingly, since the winter of 1947 almost wiped out the Bearded Tit as a breeding species in the UK (Sharrock 1976). At one site in Kent, numbers were said to be lower in 2010 than in previous years, but generally there were increases in eastern counties, including Norfolk, Suffolk and Yorkshire. Indeed, recorders in Norfolk, Somerset and Suffolk suggested that the counts submitted underestimated the real figures. In contrast, the satellite sites in Scotland seem to have been deserted; although Bearded Tits are known to be present in the vast and difficult-to-survey Tay reedbeds, no data were submitted. In 2004 the population there was estimated at 250 pairs, the most important site in Britain (Forrester *et al.* 2007). It is not known how the recent colder winters have affected this more northerly population.

Bearded Tit	Minimum no. sites	Confirmed and probable breeding pairs	Lincolnshire	2	4
			Norfolk	13	176
			Suffolk	6	248
England, SW	8	29	England, N	4	167
Dorset	4	6	Lancashire & N Merseyside	1	32
Hampshire	3	19	Yorkshire	3	135
Somerset	1	4	Wales	2	6
England, SE	18	78	Denbigh & Flint	1	1
Essex	3	8	Gwent	1	5
Kent	12	57	Scotland, Mid	1	n/a
Sussex	3	13	Perth & Kinross	1	n/a
England, E	24	438	TOTALS	57	718
Cambridgeshire	3	10			

**Woodlark *Lullula arborea***  
**Less scarce: 3,064 bp (2006 survey)**

**Coverage: moderate**

Amber

849 territories. Although the whole population is not monitored between survey years, the sample reported to the RBBP is usually about a third of the estimated total. The small reduction in numbers in 2010 (in all regions except northern England) may be a real effect of the cold 2009/10 winter; most British Woodlarks do not migrate far enough to escape the impact of hard winters.

Woodlark	Singing males/ territories	Surrey	150
		Sussex	60
		England, E	328
		Lincolnshire	17
England, SW	223	Norfolk	133
Devon	4	Suffolk	178
Dorset	25	England, C	35
Gloucestershire	1	Nottinghamshire	15
Hampshire	191	Staffordshire	20
Wiltshire	2	England, N	32
England, SE	231	Yorkshire	32
Bedfordshire	1	TOTAL	849
Berkshire	20		



Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Less scarce: 5-yr mean 1,991 bp

Coverage: high

Green

1,907 singing males or territories. As for the two previous species, there is some uncertainty about the impact of the recent cold winters on the Cetti's Warbler, which was shown to be vulnerable in the past, when it was much rarer in the UK than it is now. The annual returns to RBBP do give some indication of the effect and we see that the total number of territories has indeed dropped for the first time in ten years (see fig. 7 in Holling *et al.* 2011); it can also be seen that the 2010 total is below the 5-year mean. However, there may also be an effect of poorer reporting from the core areas where it is now common. Indeed, regional expansion in central and northern England in 2010 resulted in the first confirmed breeding records in four counties: Cleveland, Derbyshire, Lancashire & N Merseyside and Lincolnshire.

Cetti's Warbler	Singing males/ territories	Norfolk	236
		Northamptonshire	44
England, SW	691	Suffolk	272
Avon	72	England, C	63
Cornwall	9	Derbyshire	9
Devon	53	Leicestershire & Rutland	4
Dorset	100	Nottinghamshire	5
Gloucestershire	25	Staffordshire	9
Hampshire	207	Warwickshire	25
Isle of Wight	23	Worcestershire	11
Somerset	150	England, N	9
Wiltshire	52	Cheshire & Wirral	2
England, SE	390	Cleveland	1
Bedfordshire	14	Lancashire & N Merseyside	2
Berkshire	43	Yorkshire	4
Buckinghamshire	13	Wales	134
Essex	20	Anglesey	4
Greater London	3	Breconshire	3
Hertfordshire	22	Caernarfonshire	8
Kent	60	Carmarthenshire	26
Oxfordshire	14	Ceredigion	2
Surrey	5	East Glamorgan	9
Sussex	196	Gower	20
England, E	620	Gwent	52
Cambridgeshire	58	Pembrokeshire	10
Lincolnshire	10	TOTAL	1,907

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*

Potential breeder

Four sites: four singing males. Territorial Iberian Chiffchaffs have now been recorded in four of the last five years, and four males held territory in 2010, a new record.

England, SE

Kent One site: a male held territory from 29th April to 9th June.

England, N

Yorkshire Two sites: (1) a male held territory from 11th May to 22nd June; (2) a male held territory on 13th–18th June.

Wales

Gwent One site: a male held territory from 10th May to 18th June.

**Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata***  
Less scarce: 3,214 bp (2006 survey)

Coverage: moderate

Amber

619 territories. The impression that the unusually cold winters of 2008/09 and 2009/10 in the heartland of the Dartford Warbler’s UK range had led to a decline in numbers are borne out by the figures reported here. Submissions to RBBP typically account for up to about two-thirds of the national population each year, and while in 2007 and 2008 almost 2,100 territories were reported, in 2010 the proportion was down to 19% of the 2006 survey total (Wotton *et al.* 2009).

The feedback from some key counties varied. In Hampshire, the important New Forest population was not counted in 2010 but is thought not to have been greatly affected; similarly, numbers were little changed in the Isle of Wight. In Cornwall, numbers were up, in Dorset they were slightly down, in Devon it was an even worse year than 2009, and much reduced numbers were reported in Somerset. Clark & Eyre (2012) reported a dramatic crash in the Thames Basin and Wealden Heaths (which cover parts of Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex), where a population of almost 1,000 territories in 2004 was reduced to just 50 in 2010. Small numbers still hang on in Norfolk and Staffordshire, where Dartford Warblers have declined by only 1–2 pairs in each county since 2009. In Wales, where a survey in 2008 located 79 territories (Green *et al.* 2010), the total number of territories reported in both 2009 and 2010 was down to 15. The recent gains farther north in Wales have been abruptly lost.

Dartford Warbler	Total	Surrey	23
England, SW	471	Sussex	7
Cornwall	30	England, E	92
Devon	28	Norfolk	1
Dorset	345	Suffolk	91
Hampshire	52	England, C	3
Isle of Wight	9	Staffordshire	3
Somerset	7	Wales	18
England, SE	35	East Glamorgan	3
Berkshire	4	Gower	11
Kent	1	Pembrokeshire	4
		TOTAL	619



David Winnard

216. Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, Suffolk, April 2010. The run of colder-than-average winters between 2008 and 2010 have had a severe impact on the numbers of Dartford Warblers in England and Wales.



**Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*****Potential breeder**

One site: one singing male. Up to the end of 2010, there had been just six records of Marmora's Warbler in Britain. All were spring records of singing males, and all are thought to be of the nominate race, which breeds in Corsica, Sardinia and some islands off the west coast of Italy and is a partial migrant (unlike the 'Balearic Warbler' *S. s. balearica*, which is largely resident in the Balearic Islands). Four of the British records were of birds at coastal sites (Hudson *et al.* 2011).

The only previous time that a Marmora's Warbler has maintained a territory in the UK was back in 1982; that bird was the first for Britain (Lunn 1985). It was found in Yorkshire on 15th May and continued to sing from heather moorland until 22nd July. The 2010 bird in Gwent, aged as a first-summer, was the first for Wales.

Wales

Gwent One site: a first-summer male held territory on 3rd–15th June.

**Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*****Potential breeder**

One site: one pair. The first record of a territorial male Subalpine Warbler reported by RBBP was in 2009, and this has been followed up by a pair in 2010. Although nest-building occurred, there was no evidence that any eggs were laid and the stay of the birds was short-lived.

Wales

Caernarfonshire One site: a female was present on 23rd–28th May, and was seen carrying nesting material. She was paired with a male, perhaps of the eastern race *S. c. albistriata*, which was present until 30th May.



Steve Stansfield

**217.** Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, June 2010. A pair of Subalpine Warblers on Bardsey began nest-building but the partnership did not progress beyond this stage owing to the departure of the female.

**River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*****Potential breeder**

One site: one singing male. This is the third consecutive year that River Warbler has appeared in the RBBP reports. The nearest breeding River Warblers are in Germany and Finland, but there has been an expansion in the species' breeding range in northern and central Europe in recent years.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one singing male on 2nd–16th July.

**Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides***

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 4 bp**

**Coverage: near-complete**

**Red**

Seven sites: 2–10 pairs. This is an unusually widespread series of records and only the third year that breeding has been confirmed since 1994. For this species, all records of birds recorded for more than one day are listed.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: one singing male on 17th–20th April. Somerset One site: one singing male on 25th–29th June.

England, SE

Sussex One site: two pairs bred. Four adults were trapped and ringed at the site between 18th May and 2nd August and five juveniles trapped on four dates between 29th June and 19th August provided evidence of successful breeding.

England, E

Norfolk Two sites: (1) one singing male from 29th June to 7th July; (2) one singing male on 6th–12th June.

Suffolk One site: two singing males, one from 30th April to 19th May and the other on 9th–19th May.

England, N

Yorkshire One site: (1) one singing male on 26th–30th May; (2) one singing male on 12th–13th July only.

**Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta***

**Potential breeder**

One site: one singing male. The only other records in the RBBP files of long-staying Melodious Warblers are from Co. Durham in 2003 and Lancashire & N Merseyside in 2008.

England, C

Herefordshire One site: one singing male from 22nd June to 4th July.

**Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris***

**Very rare: 5-yr mean 8 bp**

**Coverage: high**

**Red**

Eight sites: 4–9 pairs. Marsh Warblers now seem to be opportunistic breeders in coastal areas, and it is perhaps late migrants that find a mate and stay to breed, as there seems to be little consistency over the years. The exception is in Sussex, where there have been breeding pairs for the last three years. The concentration of records in East Anglia, with over half of the records, is notable this year.

England, SW

Isle of Wight One site: one singing male on 12th–26th June.

England, SE

Sussex One site: two pairs bred, with five nestlings ringed.

England, E

Norfolk Four sites: (1) one pair bred raising at least three young; (2) one singing male on 3rd–14th June; (3) one singing male from 4th June to 7th July; (4) one singing male on 2nd–8th July. Suffolk One site: one pair bred, fledging at least three young. This is the first confirmed breeding record for Suffolk.

England, N

Northumberland One site: one pair probably bred. A pair was seen together on 7th–15th June, with the male singing well; nest-building was recorded on 11th.

**Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus***

**Potential breeder**

One site: one singing male. Another long-staying singing male; this one was a county first and also the longest-staying Great Reed Warbler ever in Britain (Key 2011). But we still await the first evidence of a breeding attempt.

England, C

Derbyshire One site: one singing male from 12th May to 25th June.



**Fair Isle Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes fridariensis*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 30 bp****Coverage: near-complete****Red**

A total of 31 territories were identified in an all-island survey.

**St Kilda Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis*****Rare: 136 bp (1993 partial survey)****Coverage: low****Red**

No data were received for 2010.

**Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 2 bp****Coverage: moderate****Red**

One site: one pair bred. This remains an unpredictable species, both in terms of where and when breeding pairs are found, and in terms of how many there are each year. Up to seven pairs were found in 2004 and 2008, only one in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2010, and none in 2009. The 2010 pair might have been missed if the fieldworker had not been in the area looking for Hen Harriers!

Scotland, S

Dumfries & Galloway One site: one pair bred. A pair was seen in late May, when one adult was observed carrying food into a small mature spruce plantation.

**Redwing *Turdus iliacus*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 16 bp****Coverage: low****Red**

Ten sites: 5–10 pairs. For the second year running, two pairs nested in Shetland. The numbers reported in mainland Highland, where the bulk of the small breeding population nests, are still low and an unknown number must go overlooked each year. Every singing bird or pair in suitable nesting habitat in northern Scotland should be reported, to help monitor the population of this Red-listed species.

Scotland, N & W

Highland Eight sites: three pairs bred, one pair probably bred and four singing males were recorded in the first two days of May (so may not have stayed to breed in that locality). Shetland Two sites: two pairs bred. At one site, recently fledged juveniles were seen on 3rd July and at the other, although no young were found, the pair was seen carrying food and two breeding attempts were suspected.

**Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*****Occasional breeder, last bred in 1995 (red-spotted) and 1996 (white-spotted)**

One site: one singing male. This male, of the white-spotted race *L. s. cyanecula*, was popular with visitors to the WWT reserve at Welney in Norfolk, but it remained unpaired throughout its long stay.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one singing male set up territory on 23rd April and remained until 17th August.

**Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*****Rare: 5-yr mean 44 bp****Coverage: high****Amber**

54 sites: 30–65 pairs. This is the best showing since 2002, when 30 pairs bred and records came from 70 sites. In part, the 2010 figure is enhanced by the good series of records from the Inner London area, which has long been a stronghold for Black Redstarts. There are few confirmed breeding records from Wales, although the last, in Montgomeryshire in 2006, was from a similar quarry site to that reported in Breconshire below. The record of a very young bird in Outer Hebrides follows several similar records of juveniles seen in Scotland (Fair Isle, Isle of May and

Adrian Dancy



**218.** Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*, Greater Manchester, August 2010. A singing male such as this is often the first sign that a site is occupied but in urban areas it is often difficult to follow up such records to find evidence of confirmed breeding.

England, E

Cambridgeshire Two sites: two singing males. Lincolnshire One site: one pair bred, fledging four young. Norfolk Three sites: three pairs bred. One pair raised two broods and another fledged three young. Suffolk Four sites: four pairs bred and one pair probably bred.

England, C

Derbyshire Two sites: one pair possibly bred and one singing male. Warwickshire One site: one pair possibly bred. West Midlands Two sites: one pair bred and one pair possibly bred.

England, N

Cleveland One site: one pair bred. Co. Durham One site: one singing male. Greater Manchester Two sites: one pair bred and one pair possibly bred. Sightings from six sites in April only might hint at a larger population. Lancashire & N Merseyside One site: one pair bred.

Wales

Breconshire One site: one pair bred. Two broods were raised, totalling five fledged young. This was the first breeding record for the county.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides One site: one pair possibly bred. A very young bird (still with a hint of gape) was photographed on 14th June; no adults had been seen previously in the area so the location of the breeding site is unknown, though seems most likely to have been in northern Scotland. A male (perhaps a first-summer) was singing from buildings in the Cairngorm area (Highland) on 5th June, but there were no further sightings.

Lothian; Forrester *et al.* 2007); in all cases, the juvenile suggested local breeding, yet there had been no sightings of adults earlier that year, despite the fact that all sites were well-watched.

England, SW

Avon One site: one pair bred, raising two broods, fledging in June and August. Dorset One site: one pair bred.

England, SE

Berkshire One site: one pair bred, fledging two young. Essex One site: one pair bred. Greater London 15 sites: four pairs bred plus at least 16 singing males. Kent Six sites: six pairs bred, one pair probably bred and two pairs possibly bred. Surrey Two sites: one pair bred, and one pair possibly bred. Sussex Five sites: two pairs bred, and five singing males.



**Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava flava*****Occasional breeder**

Three sites: one pair plus 1–2 mixed pairs. Since this race was added to the RBBP list (in 2008), the records submitted have been of mixed pairs only, so a pure pair fledging one young is notable.

England, SW

Cornwall One site: one pair bred, with one young fledged. Both adults were Blue-headed Wagtails.

England, C

Warwickshire Two sites: one mixed pair bred and one mixed pair possibly bred. At one, a female *M. f. flava*, paired with a male Yellow Wagtail *M. f. flavissima*, was seen taking food to a nest-site on 5th July. At the other, a female *M. f. flava* was also paired with a male Yellow Wagtail in an area with several breeding pairs of *M. f. flavissima*.

**White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 1 bp****Coverage: high****Green**

Two sites: one pair and one mixed pair. White Wagtails are irregular breeders in Shetland but elsewhere in the UK occur mainly on passage.

Scotland, N & W

Outer Hebrides One site: one female *M. a. alba* was apparently paired with a male Pied Wagtail *M. a. yarrellii*. Shetland One site: one pair bred, observed with three juveniles on 25th July.

**Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*****Occasional breeder**

One site: one singing male. This is an unusual location for a Brambling in the summer, but there was no hint that any breeding attempt occurred.

England, SW

Somerset One site: a singing male, 18th June to 4th July.

**Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*****Very rare: 5-yr mean 4 bp****Coverage: low****Green**

Five sites: 2–6 pairs. Two pairs breeding on widely separated islands is a typical showing, but there is little doubt that some pairs in remote island locations are being overlooked. The series of records in 2009 and 2010 from the Outer Hebrides suggests that there may be a breeding population there, although there have been no records of confirmed breeding since 2004.

Scotland, N & W

Argyll One site: one pair bred. Nest-building was recorded in June and the pair was seen gathering food for young on 27th June, although no juveniles were seen. The last sighting was on 1st July. Orkney One site: one pair bred. Two juveniles in a plantation on 19th July suggested local breeding. Outer Hebrides Four sites: as in 2009, single birds or pairs were seen in potential breeding habitat, although at three of these sites the only records were in May and might relate to migrants. At the fourth site, one or two birds were heard singing on 17th June.

**Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*****Rare: 50 bp (2008 survey)****Coverage: low****Amber**

Two sites: three pairs.

Scotland, Mid

North-east Scotland One site: at least two pairs bred. Fifteen fledged young were seen on 24th May, and on 7th June a nest was found, with four adults and three young nearby.

Scotland, N & W

Highland One site: one pair bred.

**Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus***

**Occasional breeder**

Two sites: 0–2 pairs. Singing birds in June in Scotland are expected, and although some stay around, few seem to attract a mate; the last breeding record in Scotland was in 1997.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one singing male on 16th–26th June. Upper Forth One site: one singing male on 21st June was different from the Perth & Kinross bird present only 4 km away.

**Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes***

**Less scarce: 5-yr mean: 71 bp\***

**Coverage: low**

Red

\* 1988–91 estimate was 3,000–6,000 bp

At least 61 sites or areas: 27–82 pairs. Although the RBBP has been collecting records of breeding Hawfinches since 2006, we are really only able to track the distribution of records, not the number of breeding pairs. Because Hawfinches are so secretive in the breeding season, they are rarely reported, so it is important that every hint of presence in breeding habitat is noted and submitted to county recorders. Nevertheless, based on the records here, this species is much scarcer than it was believed to be at the time of the 1988–91 Atlas and we await the results of Bird Atlas 2007–11 with interest.

England, SW

Dorset One site: one pair bred. Gloucestershire One extensive area: two pairs bred, nine pairs probably bred and three pairs possibly bred. Hampshire At least 25 sites within the New Forest but only single birds on single dates elsewhere: five pairs bred and 20 pairs probably bred. Wiltshire One extensive area: four pairs bred.



John Robinson

**219.** Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*, Worcestershire, February 2010. The elusive nature of this species is such that very few records of breeding birds are received. The Hawfinch has been on the RBBP list for five years now but the mean maximum number of pairs reported in those five years is only 71.



England, SE

Kent One site: two pairs possibly bred. Surrey Two sites: one pair bred and one pair possibly bred. Sussex One site: one pair possibly bred.

England, E

Norfolk One site: one pair bred and two pairs probably bred.

England, C

Derbyshire Two sites: two pairs possibly bred. Nottinghamshire One site: one pair probably bred.

England, N

Cumbria One site: one pair bred, but records of single birds at four other sites suggest numbers and breeding evidence are under-represented. Lancashire & N Merseyside Three sites: one pair bred, two pairs probably bred and one pair possibly bred. Yorkshire One site: one pair bred.

Wales

East Glamorgan Three sites: three pairs possibly bred. Gwent Three sites: four pairs bred. Meirionnydd Five sites: three pairs bred and two pairs possibly bred. Radnorshire Eight sites: two pairs bred and six pairs possibly bred.

Scotland, Mid

Perth & Kinross One site: one pair bred.

### Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Rare: 70–100 bp (1988–91 Atlas)

Coverage: low

Amber

Casual reports from the main breeding areas of the Cairngorms (Highland/North-east Scotland) amounted to just three confirmed breeding pairs and three possible breeding pairs. The population estimate will be updated following a census of this and other montane species in 2011.

### Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

Scarce: 862 bp (2009 survey)

Coverage: low

Red

58 territories. Coverage of this species is back to normal levels of non-survey years. A national survey in 2009 revealed an estimated population of 862 breeding pairs (Stanbury *et al.* 2010).

England, SW

Cornwall 16 territories. Devon 42 territories at two sites.

## Appendix I. Other species considered by the Panel also recorded in 2010.

The following five occasional or potential breeding species were recorded during the breeding season in 2010, but showed no further signs of breeding than are documented here.

### Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

In late May, a female apparently paired with a male Shoveler was seen in Leicestershire & Rutland, and what was assumed to be the same couple was reported in Cambridgeshire on the following two days. There were similar pairings in Avon in 1993 and Kent in 1994, and in Cambridgeshire in 1988 a female Blue-winged Teal paired with a male Shoveler and hatched four young.

### Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

In Fife, in late May, a male was seen to be paired with and defending a female Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*.

### Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

In mid May, a male was seen accompanying a female Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* to her nest on the Isle of May. After being chased away by a male Eider, the Velvet Scoter was not seen again and the young which hatched from the Eider's nest appeared to be normal Eider ducklings (Brockie 2011).

### Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

One was present from 21st March to 20th August at a lake in Yorkshire, summering for the seventh successive year. This bird had not previously been reported to RBBP.

### Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

Three wintering birds at a site in Kent stayed until 5th April, including a male that was heard in song from 24th March until 5th April.

#### Acknowledgments

The Rare Breeding Birds Panel would like to thank the many contributors who have supplied the data upon which this report is based. In particular we wish to recognise the willing co-operation and assistance of county and regional recorders throughout the UK, as well as the many specialist study groups, conservation organisations and numerous individuals. Without these contributions, this review would be much less comprehensive. Many recorders also reviewed an early draft of this report, thus helping to ensure the accuracy of the data presented. Valuable supplementary data were submitted from a number of national monitoring schemes, by both professional organisations and dedicated amateurs. These are referenced in the species accounts where appropriate.

The following individuals and groups provided information on certain species, collated data from other schemes, or were helpful and supportive in other ways: Dawn Balmer, Carl Barimore, Stuart Benn, Ian Court, Tony Cross and the Welsh Kite Trust, Nicola Davies and the Woodpeckers of Herefordshire project, Brian Etheridge, William George, Paul Hillis, David Jardine, Dave Leech, Leigh Lock, John Marchant, Carl Mitchell, Andy Musgrove, David Okill, Tim Poole, David Raw, Sabine Schmitt, Chris Wernham, Simon Wotton and Malcolm Wright. Some data for Northern Ireland were supplied by the Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel (Hillis 2011). We also thank the following authors for the additional texts: Stuart Benn (Slavonian Grebe), Mary Davies (Red-backed Shrike), Mark Eaton (Capercaillie and Hen Harrier), Stewart Taylor (Wryneck) and Simon Wotton (Eurasian Bittern).

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Dan Powell

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and Great White Egret *Ardea alba*, Titchfield Haven, Hampshire.



The status of Isabelline Shrike taxa in the United Arab Emirates

The Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* is a widespread and common passage migrant and winter visitor throughout the United Arab Emirates and, indeed, much of Arabia. Its taxonomy has been much debated in recent years and, while currently treated as a single, polytypic species by the British Ornithologists' Union (and *BB*), other authorities regard it as comprising two species: Turkestan (or Red-tailed) Shrike *L. phoenicuroides* (breeding in west-central Asia) and Daurian (or Isabelline) Shrike *L. isabellinus* (breeding in Mongolia and western China, to the east of *phoenicuroides* and comprising nominate *isabellinus* and *arenarius*). Although not universally accepted (see, for example, Panov 2009 for an alternative view), this treatment has been generally adopted by one major identification paper (Worfolk 2000) and many recent field guides (e.g. Svensson *et al.* 2009, van Duivendijk 2010 and Porter & Aspinall 2010). This approach is convenient from a practical point of view, since the majority of individuals of *phoenicuroides* and *isabellinus*, the two forms occurring in the Western Palearctic and Arabia, are often separable under field conditions.

Until recently, the non-breeding distribution of both *isabellinus* and *phoenicuroides* throughout the Arabian Peninsula has been poorly defined. For example, Cramp & Perrins (1993), Worfolk (2000) and the current OSME Region List of Bird Taxa (2010) all suggested that both taxa winter throughout southern Arabia. This note outlines the status and phenology of each taxon in the UAE, based on field observations by the author.

Both *phoenicuroides* and *isabellinus* are encountered quite commonly in the UAE and, in recent years, observers have become increasingly interested in the field appearance and relative status of each. A comprehensive selection of images of both taxa is now available online (see [www.uaebirding.com/photos-birds.html](http://www.uaebirding.com/photos-birds.html)) and representative adult male *phoenicuroides* and *isabellinus* are illustrated in plates 220 & 221 respectively. Classic spring males are generally easy to differentiate, with *phoenicuroides* typically exhibiting a silky white underside (sometimes tinged cream or buff on the flanks), a striking and solid black mask (emphasised by the all-black bill), well-defined white supercilium and strong rufous tinge to the forehead and

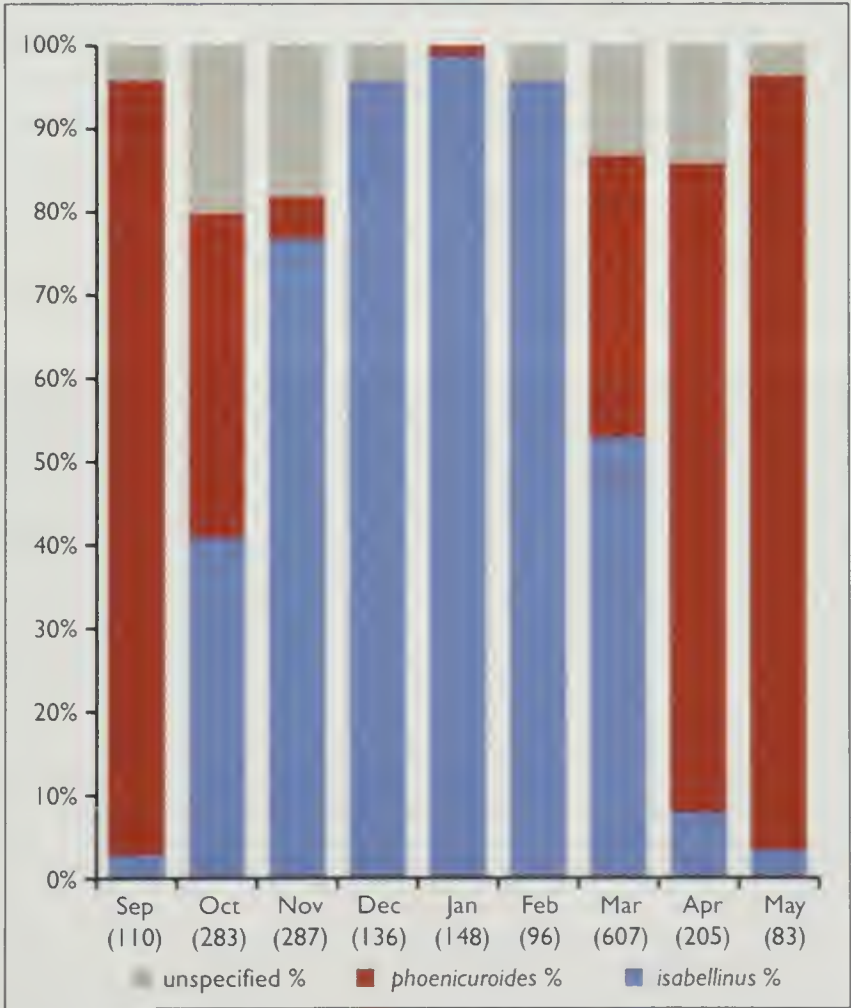


Fig. 1. Monthly percentages of Isabelline Shrikes *Lanius isabellinus* recorded by the author and assigned to subspecies, United Arab Emirates, January 2007 to December 2011. Total number of records involved placed under month. The number of unspecified records include 77 (out of 607) in March and 109 (out of 570) in October–November.

crown. In contrast, *isabellinus* typically shows a strong degree of creamy-buff saturation on the underside and cheeks, a less well-defined mask (see also below), a rather paler base to the bill, a shorter and more diffuse supercilium that is often tinged buff, and little or no warm rufous on the greyer forehead and crown. Most females (and many first-winters in autumn) can, with care, be characterised by, particularly, the rather cold, whitish and quite strongly scaled underparts (*phoenicuroides*) or the rather creamy, only lightly scaled underparts that generally offer little contrast with the upperparts (*isabellinus*).

To clarify the relative status of each taxon in the UAE, I analysed all my records of Isabelline Shrikes in the UAE from January 2007 to December 2011. These totalled 1,955 records, of which 88% were assigned sub-specifically (fig. 1). Fig. 2 examines more closely the situation from February to May on Abu Dhabi Island only, where I have recorded passerine migration systematically each spring from 2007 to 2012 inclusive. My data show that there is a clear distinction between *phoenicuroides* and *isabellinus* in terms of their occurrence in the UAE. The former is almost exclusively a passage migrant, mainly between mid September and mid October, and again from early March until early May, with stragglers until mid May or even later.

Although not recorded by me, very small numbers of *phoenicuroides* are seen in the UAE in August, at least in some years, and mainly in the last week of the month (average of 3.6 bird-days each August, during 2007–11 in the country as a whole; T. Pedersen pers. comm.).

In contrast, *isabellinus* is generally present only from October to March, with very few records outside this period (and in August, only three bird-days in total in the five years 2007–11). It is often widespread in favoured habitats (fodder fields, desert edge and urban parks) throughout the winter, with many individuals departing by mid February and replaced by a strong wave of passage migrants that peaks in the first half of March. This situation mirrors that recognised in Kuwait (AbudulRahman al-Sirhan pers. comm.) and described from eastern Saudi Arabia (Meadows 2010). Data from the last source shows that, for both taxa, the timing of migration in Saudi Arabia is very similar to that in the UAE including an apparent 'double wave' of *phoenicuroides* in spring (one in the second half of March, one in the second half of April; see fig. 2).

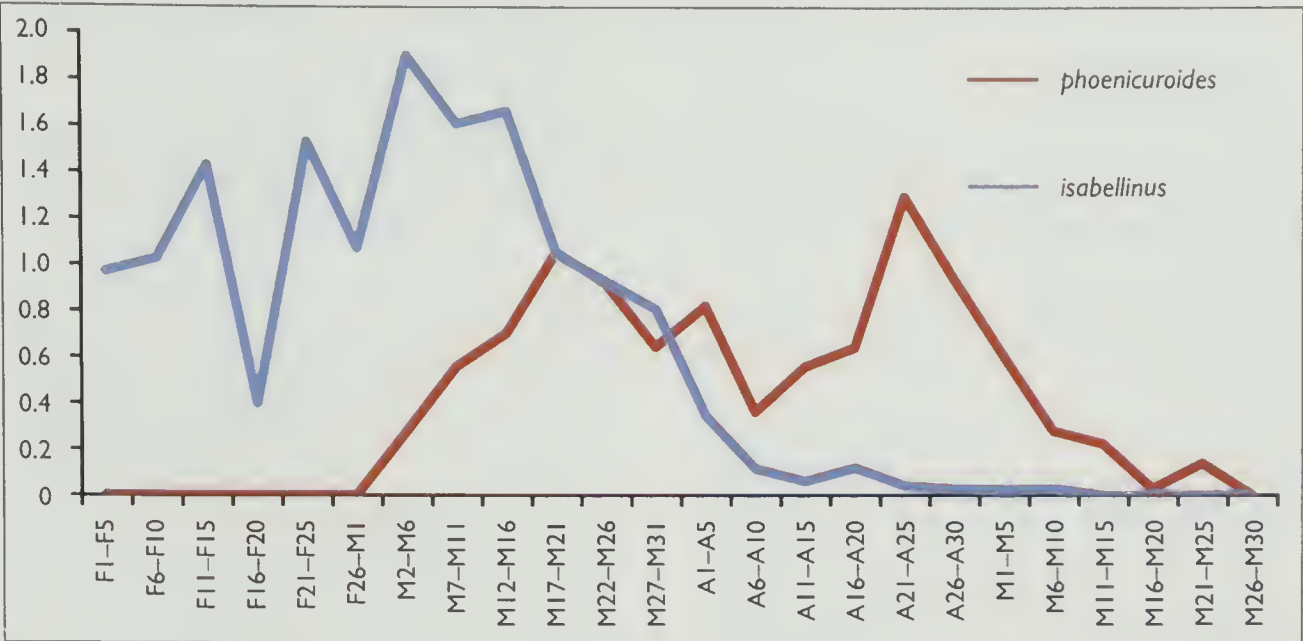
The situation regarding migration through the Middle East can also be linked to the status of Isabelline Shrike forms in western Europe. In simple terms, the western



Oscar Campbell

220. Male Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus phoenicuroides*, UAE, March 2011.





**Fig. 2.** Records of Isabelline Shrikes *Lanius isabellinus* assigned to subspecies from Abu Dhabi Island, United Arab Emirates, from 1st February to 30th May during the years 2007–12 inclusive. Data are shown as birds seen per hour of observation, averaged over the five years, and plotted against five-day blocks, starting from 1st February.

form *phoenicuroides* (which winters widely and commonly in East Africa) migrates earlier in the autumn, while *isabellinus* (which winters farther north – and west – in Africa moves through and into the Middle East later in autumn, and hence is more likely to occur as a vagrant to western Europe (and to occur later in the autumn).

In terms of records not attributed sub-specifically (12%), many refer to birds seen too briefly or distantly to be assigned

confidently. However, a small (but by no means insignificant) minority represent individuals of intermediate appearance, showing a mixture of characters indicative of both taxa (see fig. 1). Although some of these were first-calendar-year birds in autumn, fig. 1 indicates that such birds also occur in spring, in adult plumage. Presumably at least some of these are the offspring of mixed pairs (as documented by, for example, Panov 2009), while others are *karelini* or *karelini*-type



Mike Barth

**221.** Male Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus isabellinus*, UAE, October 2010.

individuals (which appear to be particularly variable in appearance).

The identification of the various Isabelline Shrike taxa is far from straightforward, and in particular there is more variability in nominate *isabellinus* than might be inferred from the literature. From those observed in the UAE, variation in one character in particular, the extent of the black facial mask, was frequent. This mask is typically described as being well defined and complete, from bill base through the lores to the ear-coverts, on adult male *isabellinus* (Pearson 2000; Worfolk 2000; van Duivendijk 2010). Examples of *isabellinus* showing a poorly defined loreal bar, yet lacking the scaling on the breast and flanks typical of females, are frequently encountered in the UAE – see plates 222–224. Some of these, including the individual illustrated in plate 224, are heard singing. A limited mask, barely apparent across the lores, is generally regarded as a feature of *arenarius*. However, other features, such as darkness of the remiges and intensity of rufous on the rectrices, do not fit this taxon and there are no confirmed records of *arenarius* from the UAE (or elsewhere in the OSME region).

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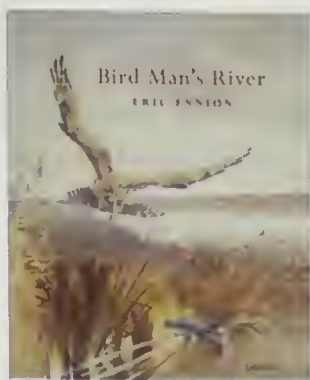


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222–224. Isabelline Shrikes *Lanius isabellinus isabellinus*, UAE, December 2006 (222, left), February 2007 (223, upper right), March 2011 (224, lower right).



# Reviews



## Bird Man's River

By Eric Ennion, edited by Bob Walthew

Benton Street Books, 2011

Hbk, 159pp, colour plates

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£35.00 **BB Bookshop** price £31.00

This is more than a mere book. It is an exhibition, a retrospective, a resurrection of an artist and of his milieu, unearthed from the fens he loved and later lost to war-effort improvement. Here, his record is restored, patched and polished now for all to see. Eric Ennion wrote *Bird Man's River* in the late 1930s. He created most of the artwork included here to publish with his evocative and in places vivid descriptions, working always in situ, from raw, lived experience of birds and their wild, wetland haunts. He centred on the then scruffy fenlands north of Cambridge, close to where he lived and worked as a GP, but he travelled widely too, sketching and painting as he went.

Ennion is widely regarded as one of, if not the most influential artist in the genre of the twentieth century. Former *Birds* magazine editor Rob Hume speaks of outputs 'so very different from any field guide illustration... he achieved movement, action, jizz to perfection.' Artist John Busby has told me that 'Eric was, and still is, the most inspiring artist of nature I have ever known. I continue to marvel at his understanding of everything he drew, and how he gave such individual life to each bird and animal.'

The plates are reproduced at actual size or as close to as the format of the book will allow. Any gaps in the narrative have been seamlessly filled by Bob Walthew, with a loving and sensitive eye. The detail of some of the prose is sublime, confirming Ennion as a field naturalist of immense skill and insight. This description of a ditch is just one small but precious example: '...the muddy sides are riddled by the borings of Snipe. Most of these bores are really two half-circular holes, one for each of the slightly parted mandibles, with a fragile mud partition in between. Every now and then there is a single, wider hole where a worm was found and cautiously withdrawn.'

His description of a young, passage Osprey seen in the Broads nearly 20 years before the species had returned to breed in Britain, is another precious gem: 'the legs were often let down, as if testing their reach... the clenched blue feet looked workmanlike'.

Inter-war-year austerity prevented publication of *Bird Man's River* at the time. Ennion tried again in the early 1950s to see it published, adding revisions to the text, but the high costs of colour reproduction again frustrated his attempts.

Laurie Lee once wrote that 'any bits of warm life preserved by the pen are trophies snatched from the dark, are branches of leaves fished out of the flood, are tiny arrests of mortality'. *Bird Man's River* is all of these things, warm life resurrected in words and paint, and brought together in this beautifully and affectionately presented tribute to the man, his birds and his sadly much diminished but yet retrievable places.

'Through his art and teaching he changed the whole direction of wildlife art,' says John Busby. 'Above all, I think he wanted people to see nature as it really was, not as presented in the old book illustrations, and to understand the vibrant energy of creature's lives. All the artists I know who work from life today regard Eric as the supreme example to follow.'

It remains curious to me that other artists I have spoken to admit that while they are aware of Eric Ennion's importance within the sphere of so-called wildlife art, his influence may not have been felt more widely. Is it time that wildlife art broke out of its 'box'? What other branches of art confine themselves narrowly to a subject? There are sound practical and historical reasons why wildlife artists formed their own Society (Ennion himself being a founder), but can we now through art begin to challenge the view that 'wildlife' appreciation and representation exists somehow separately from wider human interests and concerns? As we confront the challenges of conservation and a beleaguered environment in the twenty-first century, it would be a fitting tribute to Eric Ennion and to champions of 'nature' of all kinds if we could use his example and prodigious talent to begin to break down some of these imagined and in some ways self-imposed barriers. *Bird Man's River* can be a significant contribution to that end.

Conor Jameson

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## Extremely Rare Birds in the Western Palearctic

By Marcel Haas

Lynx Edicions, 2012

Hbk, 244pp, 300+ colour photographs

ISBN 978-84-96553-83-5 Subbuteo code M21199

£24.95 **BB Bookshop** price £22.95

This book does exactly what it says on the tin. It is the first attempt to draw together all the records of excep-

tionally rare birds in the Western Palearctic, as defined by *BWP*, focusing on the 155 species that have occurred in the region fewer than ten times. The author does not discuss patterns or causes of vagrancy, nor identification, but has concentrated on producing an accurate, concise and thorough documentation of all those records in an attractive and well-produced book.

The taxonomy follows that of the Dutch authorities so that (for example) Amur Wagtail *Motacilla (alba) leucopsis* and Least Tern *Sternula (albifrons) antillarum* are treated as full species (the BOU still treats both as subspecies). At a higher taxonomic level, I was aware that the boundaries of some families are under review but was surprised to see the New World warblers (Parulidae) and blackbirds (Icteridae) placed in the buntings (Emberizidae).

The majority of the book is taken up by the individual species accounts. A brief text in the left-hand column lies opposite a list of accepted records (up to and including 2008) in a highlighted box in the right-hand column. The text outlines the breeding and wintering range of the species, includes additional well-documented records from 2009 and 2010, and presents details of some records that were unacceptable or of doubtful origin to complete the picture.

A real strength of the book is the number of photographs included. For many species every record, or a good proportion of them, are backed up with photos. Many are specimens, some held in private collections, for example the Faroese Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* from October 1980 and the Maltese Striped Crake *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* from April 2004. As might be expected, the quality of the photographs varies. Some are first class but a lot are best described as record shots; occasionally it is disappointing to see a poor-quality image when much better ones have been published elsewhere. In my view it is arguable whether a handful are actually identifiable, while

even locating the White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus* or the 2005 Azores Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina* in their respective photographs is a challenge in itself. Only 32 of the 155 species covered are not accompanied by photographs, although images of two of these, Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla* and Bay-breasted Warbler *Setophaga castanea*, both in Cornwall in October 1995, were published in *BB*.

Since this book covers a region with so many different records committees, from the ultra-conservative BOU to the more liberal (and arguably more pragmatic) Dutch, some inconsistencies are bound to occur. For example, the very first species account is for Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*, where we have three pages of Dutch records but just a brief summary, lacking any details, of records from elsewhere. Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* and Daurian Starling *Agropsar sturninus* suffer in similar fashion. Surely it is time for some consistency of treatment, at least across Europe.

Inevitably, books of this nature become out of date before they are published and it seems likely that the status of some species included will change markedly over the next few years. Kuwait, Egypt, Mauritania, the Cape Verde Islands, the Azores and Iceland are all now receiving much better coverage and perhaps it won't be long before the Ural Mountains are 'sussed out'.

A key element of this book is that so much relevant information – records, photographs, details of museum specimens and references (over 700 of them) – is brought together concisely and the author is to be commended for this. The book will certainly appeal to the increasing band of Western Palearctic listers and those with an interest in rare birds and vagrancy – testament to the fact that just about anything can turn up anywhere. I am not so sure, however, that there is enough here to appeal to many outside this rather specialist audience.

*Paul Harvey*

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# News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

## 'BB' joins the Cuckoo class of 2012

*British Birds* is delighted to join the BTO Cuckoo project with the sponsorship of a satellite-tagged Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* – code number 115591, now christened 'BB'.

'BB' was caught and tagged near Loch Katrine, near Stirling in Upper Forth, on 17th May, and is a two-year-old adult male. Together with four other Scottish, four Welsh and two English Cuckoos, 'BB' can now be tracked on the BTO website [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org) as he heads south to his African wintering grounds.

Last year's pioneering Cuckoo tracking project saw five male English Cuckoos tracked south to the rainforest of the Congo basin. Two of them – Lyster and Chris – were tracked all the way home to Norfolk this spring and Lyster famously appeared on BBC TV. Chris had already started his southward migration again by 12th June, when his



© BTO

**225.** Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* 'BB' with newly fitted satellite tag, Loch Katrine, Upper Forth, May 2012.

satellite tag showed that he was in Belgium.

Cuckoo numbers are down by 63% in England and 34% in Wales compared with just 2% in Scotland since 1995. The BTO hopes that this year's satellite-tracking exercise will shed some light on this disparity, maybe as a result of different wintering areas or migration routes selected by English, Welsh and Scottish Cuckoos.

## Great White Egrets breed in the UK – Glossy Ibis next?

The latest southern heron to breed for the first time in the UK is the Great White Egret *Ardea alba* following recent successful nesting records of Purple Heron *A. purpurea*, Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* and Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*. Indeed, Cattle Egret and Little Bittern have both bred in the same area of Somerset as this year's pair of Great White Egrets.

Natural England confirmed that the Great White Egret has nested in Britain for the first time, at Shapwick Heath NNR, in Somerset. At least two young were seen in June. The female was colour-ringed as a nestling in May 2009, in Besne, France, and she was sighted in Lancashire, Wales and Gloucestershire before visiting the Somerset Levels for the first time in April 2010. She has remained

there ever since, coping with two severe British winters.

Simon Clarke, Reserve Manager for Shapwick Heath, said: 'This is hugely exciting and we've been keeping everything crossed and a close eye on the nest since the signs of nesting activity were first noticed in April. In the last few years, we've been carrying out a lot of work to improve the reserve's reedbeds for Bitterns [*Botaurus stellaris*] and Otters [*Lutra lutra*], but it seems that Great White Egrets have also appreciated the work we've done.'

Mark Holling, Secretary of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, said: 'In recent years, Great White Egrets have been increasingly recorded in the breeding season though it was only in 2010 that there were indications that some of the visiting birds might stay in Britain to breed, with pairs in

both Somerset and Suffolk. Although widely anticipated, it is still welcome news that a pair is now breeding, and the extensive nature reserves in the Avalon Marshes in Somerset are becoming quite a centre for rare breeding birds. Other rare herons have featured in the news the last few years. The first breeding of Cattle Egrets was recorded in 2008, the second breeding by Little Bitterns occurred in 2010 (both of these records also in Somerset) and the first breeding record of Purple Herons in Kent was also in 2010.<sup>7</sup> (As the report in this issue of *BB* shows.)

Tony Whitehead, speaking for the RSPB, said: 'This is another major step forward for nature conservation, and the RSPB is delighted to be working alongside Natural England and the Somerset Ornithological Society to protect these pioneering birds as they breed for the first time. The Avalon Marshes are a wonderful example of

landscape-scale conservation, where partnership working has produced one of western Europe's largest and best wetlands. The really exciting thing is now predicting what's going to turn up next. It's the sort of place where anything is possible!'

With a pair of Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* present in the area in summer 2012, this species would be a good bet for the next British breeding 'first' in Somerset.

Commenting on the Great White Egret story on the *BB* website ([www.britishbirds.co.uk](http://www.britishbirds.co.uk)), Lukasz Lawicki pointed out that the first breeding record in Germany has come in the same year (see [www.dda-web.de](http://www.dda-web.de)). And 'in Poland in 2011 it was a record breeding season – c. 143 nests at four sites (first breeding record in Poland was in 1997). Expansion of this species in the last ten years in western and central Europe (both breeding and non-breeding population) runs at an amazing pace!'

## Defra cancels plan for state-sanctioned Buzzard persecution

The extraordinary plan by Defra for a trial of Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* capture and nest destruction at the behest of the Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* -shooting fraternity was itself shot down within a week of its announcement.

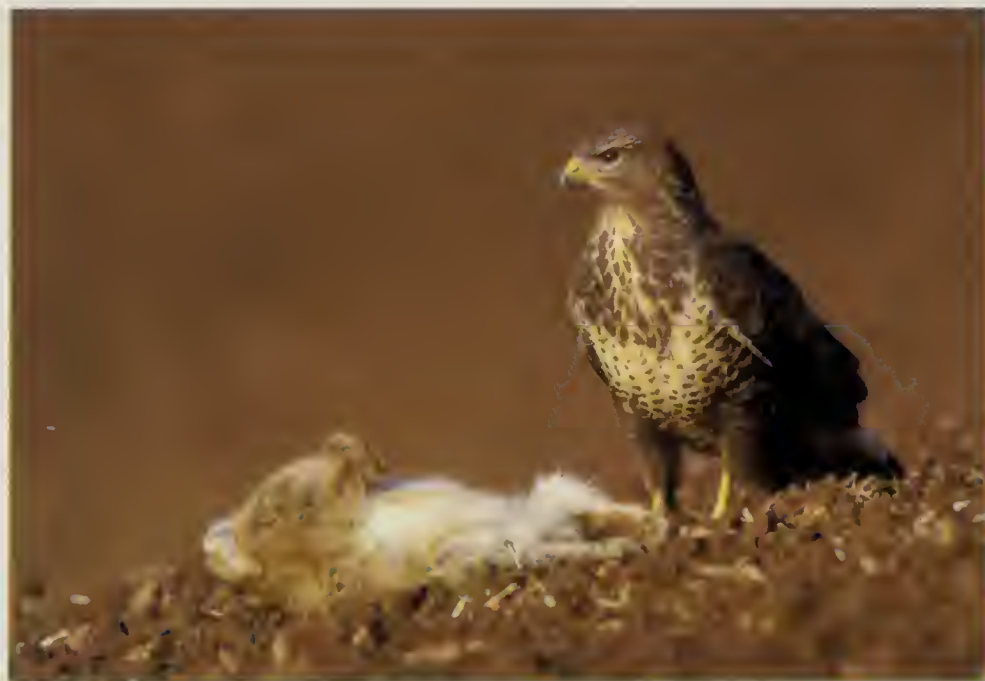
There was universal outrage when Defra announced on 24th May that it intended to spend £375,000 on a licensed three-year trial of Buzzard persecution on three shooting estates in Northumberland. It seemed that the clock had been turned back 200 years to a time when the landed gentry dictated government policy.

The RSPB declared itself 'stunned' by Defra's plan to allow the destruction of Buzzard nests and to permit Buzzards to be taken into captivity to

remove them from shooting estates. It would have set 'a terrible precedent', the Society said. Martin Harper, the RSPB's Conservation Director, said: 'We are shocked by Defra's plans to destroy Buzzard nests and to take Buzzards into captivity to protect a non-native gamebird released in its millions. Buzzards play a minor role in Pheasant losses, compared with other factors like collisions with vehicles.'

Pheasants are indeed non-native birds in the UK, and around 40 million are released every year for shooting. The impacts of this practice on wildlife have been poorly documented, but serious questions have been raised about the impact that such a large injection of captive-reared birds might

have on the predator-prey balance in our countryside. Buzzards will take young Pheasants from rearing pens, given the opportunity, but the RSPB believes that the issue can be managed without destroying nests or moving Buzzards. Measures include providing more cover for young Pheasants in release pens, visual deterrents to discourage birds of prey and providing alternative food sources.



Mike Lane

226. Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*.



Mr Harper added: 'There are options for addressing the relatively small number of Pheasant poults lost to Buzzards. Destroying nests is completely unjustified and catching and removing Buzzards is unlikely to reduce predation levels, as another Buzzard will quickly take its place. Both techniques would be illegal under current wildlife laws, and I think most people will agree with us that reaching for primitive measures, such as imprisoning Buzzards or destroying their nests, when wildlife and economic interests collide is totally unacceptable.'

'At a time when funding for vital conservation work is so tight, and with another bird of prey, the Hen Harrier [*Circus cyaneus*], facing extinction as a breeding bird in England, I can think of better ways of spending £400,000 of public funds. This money could work harder for wildlife, and I hope the Government will therefore put a stop to this project.'

Indeed, the Government did. Less than a week after the plan was revealed, it was cancelled on 30th May. Defra minister Richard Benyon (a Berkshire landowner of over 8,000 ha) said: 'In the light of the public concerns expressed in recent days, I have decided to look at developing new research proposals on Buzzards.'

The RSPB was understandably relieved. Martin Harper's reaction: 'We're pleased the minister has listened to people's concerns and acted in the public interest by cancelling this project. This is a strong decision, reflecting the strength of the nation's desire to see Government protecting precious wildlife.'

'The recovery of the Buzzard is being celebrated by the public after many decades of persecution. It is clear they don't want their taxes being spent on removing Buzzards and the Government has to ensure that no bird of prey will

be killed in the name of sport.'

The 2010 British Breeding Bird Survey shows that the breeding population of Buzzards rose by 146% from 1995 to 2009. Worryingly, Mr Benyon seems to regard the recovery of a formerly persecuted bird of prey as a potential problem... He said: 'The success of conservation measures has seen large increases in the numbers of Buzzards and other birds of prey [and] I celebrate that. At the same time it is right that we make decisions on the basis of sound evidence and we do need to understand better the whole relationship between raptors, gamebirds and other livestock. I will collaborate with all the organisations that have an interest in this issue and will bring forward new proposals.'

Defra's justification for the Buzzard control proposals were the results of the 2011 National Gamekeepers' Organisation survey, which found that three-quarters of keepers believed that Buzzards had a harmful effect on their Pheasant shoots. Hardly a scientific study. The RSPB pointed to previous research that found that few Pheasant chicks were killed by any bird of prey: an independent study by ADAS, and commissioned by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, found that, on average, just 1–2% of Pheasant poults released were taken by *all* birds of prey.

A Defra official acknowledged that the RSPB's campaign had been compelling. She said that new research would aim to establish the impact of birds of prey on Pheasants first, before control measures were considered. There is no timetable for the new terms of reference.

The message to anyone who cares about Britain's birds of prey is that vigilance is now essential. Contact your MP, in writing or by e-mail, before Defra comes back with its revised proposals.

## Serial egg-collector banned from Scotland for life

A serial egg-collector has received an Anti Social Behaviour Order banning him from visiting Scotland during the breeding season (1st February to 31st August) for the rest of his life. Matthew Gonshaw, 49, from Bow in East London, pleaded guilty at Inverness Sheriff Court to charges of taking 20 wild bird eggs from the Isle of Rum in 2011. He was also caught in possession of egg-collecting equipment. As well as the ASBO, he was ordered to serve two six-month jail terms concurrently.

Gonshaw has already served four prison terms for egg-collecting and had already been given a ten-year ASBO preventing him from visiting Scotland during the breeding season (*Brit. Birds* 105: 231). Speaking at the sentencing, Sheriff Margaret Neilson said that her main concern was to 'protect

the wildlife of Scotland from predators like you' and described Gonshaw as a 'wildlife destroyer'.

In June 2011, Gonshaw was arrested on the Isle of Rum after he was caught taking the eggs of Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*, Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* and Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*. Commenting on the sentencing, RSPB Scotland Head of Investigations, Ian Thomson, said: 'We welcome this sentence and the strong comments made by the Sheriff as it sends out a clear message to those who seek to destroy Scotland's natural heritage. This successful prosecution is the result of hard work by the Northern Constabulary, the National Wildlife Crime Unit, Scottish Natural Heritage and RSPB Scotland.'

## Goshawks targeted in the Peak District

The RSPB and Severn Trent Water have expressed their outrage at the wanton destruction of a Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* nest in the Peak District and the Society is offering a reward of £1,000 for information leading to a conviction. This crime is the latest in a long-running series of attacks on raptors in the Peak District and leaves just one active Goshawk nest in the entire Derwent Valley, which previously held six pairs.

The RSPB's Mark Thomas said: 'Once again we're faced with the destruction of birds of prey in

Britain's most visited national park. The sight of Goshawk eggs, only days from hatching, lying smashed on the forest floor is heartbreaking and proves that this bird is being systematically wiped out in the north of the Peak District.'

The Derwent Valley has been subject to a catalogue of raptor persecution incidents, with the most recent confirmed case concerning Glen Brown, a gamekeeper convicted of using a caged pigeon to lure birds of prey to a trap. Derbyshire Police have launched an investigation of the crime, which took place on land managed by Severn Trent Water.

## Bird trapping on Cyprus nets 2.8 million birds

In Cyprus, bird trapping with mist-nets and limesticks continues to increase, threatening many migrants travelling through the island. BirdLife Cyprus carried out monitoring of illegal trapping throughout 2011 and found that 2.8 million birds were victims of these barbaric practices during the year. It is the highest number of cases reported since the BirdLife Cyprus campaign against illegal killing was launched ten years ago. This highlights the increasing trend in bird trapping in Cyprus, which threatens to reverse all the progress achieved in the first years of the new millennium.

The campaign, supported by the RSPB, started in 2002. Each year, BirdLife Cyprus has undertaken field surveys on trapping activities and has just produced a new report assessing trapping cases during winter 2011/12. It includes an overview on the situation and the ecological impact of illegal bird trapping in the country, as well as the latest survey results. BirdLife Cyprus calls upon the competent authorities, both from the Republic of Cyprus and the UK sovereign base areas, to adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach, if illegal bird trapping is to be stopped. See [www.birdlifecyprus.org](http://www.birdlifecyprus.org)

## Petrel increase is very welcome

A BirdLife survey in southern New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, has encountered the largest single aggregation of the Critically Endangered Beck's Petrel *Pseudobulweria becki* ever recorded. More than 100 birds were estimated at one location, after a single count of 58 birds was made. For a seabird species lost to science for 79 years until its rediscovery in 2007, these vital new data offer a glimmer of hope. 'These findings give us some important clues to take the conservation of Beck's Petrel forward,' said Jez Bird, the BirdLife project leader.

Until recently, Beck's Petrel was known from only two specimens: a female taken at sea east of New Ireland in 1928, and a male taken in the Solomon Islands in 1929. Its rediscovery, in July and August 2007, was made when an expedition encountered the species at four localities off New Ireland. Beck's Petrel is thought to have a (declining) global population of fewer than 250 mature individuals.

One important feature of the current survey is that, unlike the 2007 rediscovery and subsequent

sightings, it didn't use 'chum' to attract the birds. Chum is an extremely effective attractant but it can yield a biased impression of a species' true abundance. 'To see so many Beck's Petrels without [chumming] is unprecedented,' said Jez Bird. 'Typically these birds are solitary at sea and are encountered far offshore. A gathering like this, so close to land, while not definitive, strongly indicates that they are breeding nearby.'

As well as actively searching for the birds, the survey involved the local coastal communities. Petrels were (and still are) frequently harvested in the Pacific, and fear of their eerie night-time calls often led villages to establish taboo areas in the forest where entry is prohibited. Intriguingly, none of the locals knew Beck's Petrel when presented with pictures and there was no knowledge of any nesting areas. This, and the apparent abundance of certain petrel predators like wild pigs in coastal and foothill forest suggests that they are most likely to be breeding in montane areas, consistent with what is already known of similar species.

For extended versions of many of the stories featured here,  
and much more, visit our website [www.britishbirds.co.uk](http://www.britishbirds.co.uk)



# Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Harry Hussey

This summary of unchecked reports covers early May to early June 2012.

Headlines For some birders, the highlight of the spring was Britain's first twitchable Orphean Warbler for 31 years, although a Cream-coloured Courser on a Herefordshire hilltop was a serious contender for many more. Other outstanding rarities included a Macaronesian Shearwater off Cornwall, a Baillon's Crake in Anglesey, a Greater Sand Plover in the Outer Hebrides, a Great Snipe in Somerset, two European Rollers in Yorkshire and a Collared Flycatcher in Donegal. Most of these were short-stayers and the crake was only audible. More convenient for the masses was a lingering Pallid Harrier in Yorkshire and a long-staying Squacco Heron in Avon. A wide scatter of Great White Egrets, Purple Herons, Glossy Ibises, Black Kites, Red-footed Falcons, Black-winged Stilts, European Bee-eaters, Woodchat Shrikes, Short-toed Larks and Red-rumped Swallows brought a Mediterranean feel to proceedings, while those seeking skuas on North Uist enjoyed a short-lived but impressive passage of Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas and a male Snowy Owl.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 14th–16th May; Harolds-wick, Unst, 24th–26th May, Gutcher, Yell (both Shetland), 24th–26th May. Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* Bridgend Farm Pool (Clyde), long-stayer to 21st May. Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* Shapwick Heath (Somerset), 5th June. Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* St John's Loch (Highland), long-stayer to 11th May. Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* North American race *dresseri*, Malin Head (Co. Donegal), 2nd June. King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* Ythan Estuary (North-east Scotland), long-stayer to 21st May; Roannish Island (Co. Donegal), 19th–20th May; Blackdog (North-east Scotland), 28th May to 10th June. Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* Port Seton, 9th–15th May, also Gullane (both Lothian), 20th May; South Uist (Outer Hebrides), two, 15th May; Blackdog, 5th June; Burray (Orkney), 10th June.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* At sea, 4 km southwest of Melvaig (Highland), 10th May; South Ronaldsay (Orkney), 14th–20th May; Sumburgh Head (Shetland), 28th May; Evie (Orkney), 3rd June; Fetlar (Shetland), 10th June.

Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli* Pendeen (Cornwall), 8th June.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Flamborough (Yorkshire), 7th–14th May; Willenhall (West Midlands), 12th May; Waltham Brooks (Sussex), 18th May; Ilfracombe (Devon), 21st May; Pulborough Brooks (Sussex), 23rd May; Pennington (Hampshire), 2nd–4th June. Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Blagdon Lake (Avon), long-stayer to 17th May; Dungeness (Kent), 30th May; The Lizard (Cornwall), 9th June. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Old Wolverton (Buckinghamshire), 19th–21st May; Bantry (Co. Cork), 23rd May; West Bexington (Dorset), 24th May; Seaton, 24th May, Yelland (both Devon), 25th–27th May. Great White Egret *Ardea alba* In addition



227. Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Blagdon Lake, Avon, May 2012.

Rich Andrews

## Recent reports

to the breeding pair at Shapwick Heath, Somerset (see pp. 423–424), there were records from Cambridgeshire, Cheshire & Wirral, Devon, Essex, Gwent, Isle of Wight, Kent, Lincolnshire, Co. Mayo, Norfolk, Pembrokeshire, Suffolk and Sussex. **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* Walmore Common (Gloucestershire), 10th May; Shapwick Heath, 13th May; Tresco (Scilly), 19th May; Tamar Bridge (Devon), 28th May; Lakenheath Fen (Suffolk), 28th May; Brogborough Lake (Bedfordshire), 2nd June; Church Norton (Sussex), 4th June; Dungeness, 5th–10th June. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Booltiagh (Co. Clare), 4th June. **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* After the influx in April, four were seen together in Caernarfonshire, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Gwent, Norfolk, Somerset, Suffolk and Yorkshire; three in Hampshire and Sussex; two in Hertfordshire and Kent; and singles in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Co. Cork, Essex, Forth, Greater London and Nottinghamshire. **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* Several lingering and wandering birds included four in Pembrokeshire, three at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), at least two in Hampshire, two in Somerset, Suffolk and Sussex, and singles in Anglesey, Cheshire & Wirral, Co. Cork, Devon, Essex, Lancashire & N Merseyside, Co. Wexford and Co. Wicklow.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* A widespread influx included records from Caernarfonshire, Cornwall, Cumbria, Devon, Dorset, Hertfordshire, Isle of

Wight, Kent, Lancashire & N Merseyside, Lothian, Norfolk, Scilly, Sussex, Co. Wexford and Yorkshire, with the majority in the period 20th–26th May. **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* Stiffkey Fen (Norfolk), 10th May; Donna Nook, 11th May, then Rimac (both Lincolnshire), 12th May; Welwick/Pattrington (Yorkshire), 14th–18th May; Long Buckby, then West Haddon (both Northamptonshire), 28th May. **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* Stodmarsh (Kent), 16th May; Jubilee River NR (Buckinghamshire), 21st–22nd May; Wisbech (Cambridgeshire), 23rd May; Owenahincha (Co. Cork), 24th May; Tacumshin, 25th May to 6th June; Ouse Fen (Cambridgeshire), 27th May; Elmswell (Suffolk), 28th–29th May; Flamborough, 29th May; Abberton Resr (Essex), 30th May; Rockland Broad (Norfolk), 29th–31st May; Buckenham (Norfolk), 30th May; Minsmere (Suffolk), 30th–31st May; Vange (Essex), 31st May; Dull, 30th–31st May, then near Aberfeldy (both Perth & Kinross), 1st June; Willington GP (Derbyshire), 4th–10th June; Kilcolgan (Co. Galway), 4th–5th June; Tealham Moor (Somerset), 4th–10th June; Snaresbrook (Greater London), 5th June.

**Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* Malltraeth Marshes (Anglesey), singing male, 22nd May to 4th June.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Long-stayers at Elmley (Kent), two to 11th May and Frampton Marsh (Lincolnshire), to 18th May; Needingworth Quarry (Cambridgeshire), 22nd May; Paxton Pits (Cambridgeshire), 24th May; Taw Estuary (Devon), 24th May; Radipole/Lodmoor (Dorset), 24th–25th May; Abbotsbury (Dorset), 24th–27th May; Newport Wetlands (Gwent), 25th May; Exminster Marshes, 27th then Powderham Marshes (both Devon), 27th–29th May; Pennington, 27th–29th May, with two, 2nd–9th June; Hodbarrow (Cumbria), 28th May; Blaydon (Co. Durham), 29th May; Fairburn Ings (Yorkshire), 30th–31st May; Curry Moor (Somerset), three, 2nd June; Cley (Norfolk), 6th–10th June. **Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor* Bradnor Hill (Herefordshire), 20th–23rd May. **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* Marazion (Cornwall), 9th May, two 10th, one to 12th May; Cley, 10th May; Holy Island (Northumberland), 15th–19th May. **Greater Sand**



Mike Lawrence

**228.** Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*, Bradnor Hill, Herefordshire, May 2012.



Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Benbecula (Outer Hebrides), 8th–9th June. American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Tacumshin, 11th–20th May; Old Head of Kinsale (Co. Cork), 17th May; Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 22nd May; North Ronaldsay, 3rd June. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Inishkeas (Co. Mayo), 4th June. White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* Cley, 11th May; Holy Island, 16th–21st May. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* South Uist, 28th May. Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* Tynninghame Bay (Lothian), 5th June. Great Snipe *Gallinago media* West Sedgemoor (Somerset), 25th May. Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Hodbarrow, 9th–12th May; The Gearagh (Co. Cork), 18th May; Saltholme (Cleveland), 24th–25th May and 2nd–4th June. Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* Loch of Strathbeg, long-stayer to 27th May, then Ythan Estuary (also North-east Scotland) and Loch of Mey (Highland), 28th May. Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* Old Moor (Yorkshire), 10th May; Upton Warren (Worcestershire), 15th May; Slimbridge 16th–17th May, 5th and 9th June, presumably same Coombe Hill Meadows (both Gloucestershire), 18th May to 3rd June; Inishkeas, 25th May and two on 4th June; Tory Island (Co. Donegal), 4th June; Nosterfield (Yorkshire), 6th June; Benbecula, 9th June; Brockholes NR (Lancashire & N Merseyside), 9th June.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* North Uist (Outer Hebrides), 600, 13th May then 635, 14th May. Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* North Uist, 550, 13th May. Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* Cross Ness/Barking Bay (Greater London), 19th–25th May, two, 26th–29th May. Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Thorne Moors (Yorkshire), 30th May. Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* Kinnaird Head (North-east Scotland), 27th May. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Saltwick Nab (Yorkshire), 10th June. White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Tresco, 18th May; Stodmarsh, two, 26th May; Saltholme, 27th May. Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* Tacumshin, 12th May to 10th June.

Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* North Uist, 14th May to 10th June. Alpine Swift *Apus melba* Huttoft, then Theddlethorpe (both Lincolnshire), 11th May;

Upminster (Greater London), 13th May. European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Widespread influx included six together in Essex, Kent and Norfolk, five together in Suffolk and Yorkshire, two together in Sussex, and singles in Anglesey, Angus, Cambridgeshire, Caernarfonshire, Cleveland, Co. Durham, Cornwall, Cumbria, Denbighshire, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Lincolnshire, Pembrokeshire, Scilly and Co. Waterford. European Roller *Coracias garrulus* Spurn, then Kilnsea, 29th May, same Aldbrough, 31st May to 10th June, another Hornsea (all Yorkshire), 4th and 6th June.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* Widespread influx of about 20, including up to six in Scilly, and other records from Caernarfonshire, Co. Cork, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Lancashire & N Merseyside, Norfolk, Northumberland, Suffolk and Co. Wexford. Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* St Mary's, 18th–24th May; Fair Isle, 21st May; St Agnes (Scilly), 21st May; Farne Islands (Northumberland), 27th–29th May; St Martin's (Scilly), 30th May; Baltasound, Unst, 31st May; Lundy (Devon), two, 1st–6th June; Cape Clear (Co. Cork), 3rd June. Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* Widespread influx of at least 30, including up to five in Scilly, and other records from Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Dorset, Fair Isle, Kent, Lincolnshire, Co. Mayo, Norfolk, North-east Scotland, Northumberland, Shetland, Suffolk, Co. Wexford and Yorkshire.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Flamborough Head, 25th May; Landguard



229. Roller *Coracias garrulus*, Aldbrough, Yorkshire, June 2012.

Richard Stonier

Brian Clasper



**230.** Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*, Hartlepool Headland, Cleveland, May 2012.

(Suffolk), 26th May; Northward Hill (Kent), 26th May; Cape Clear, 30th May; South Walney (Cumbria), 4th June; Isle of May, 6th–9th June, two on 7th; Bardsey (Caernarfonshire), 8th June. Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* Kenidjack (Cornwall), 28th May to 10th June; Porlock (Somerset), 5th–10th June. Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* Hartlepool Headland (Cleveland), 29th May. Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* Portland (Dorset), 9th May; Bardsey, 14th May; St Abb's Head (Borders), 20th May; Weybourne (Norfolk), 20th May; Whalsay (Shetland), 21st May; Virkie (Shetland), 22nd May; Fair Isle, 26th

Ian Cowgill



**231.** Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, Fair Isle, May 2012.

May; Tiree (Argyll), 28th May; Lundy, two, 30th May, one to 2nd June; Quendale (Shetland), 29th May to 2nd June. Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* Walberswick (Suffolk), 12th May; Strumpshaw Fen (Norfolk), 9th–22nd May; Wilstone Resr (Hertfordshire), 20th–21st May; Blacktoft Sands (Yorkshire), 29th May. Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* Leyton (Greater London), 16th–18th May; Northward Hill, 16th May; St Mary's, 19th May; Bardsey, 3rd–5th June; Isle of May, 7th June. Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* North Ronaldsay, 10th June. Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Warham Greens (Norfolk), 9th June. Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Western-super-Mare (Somerset), 19th May to 2nd June; Radipole, 22nd–24th May; Cley, 30th May; Gunwalloe (Cornwall), 3rd–6th June.

Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus* Selsey Bill (Sussex), long-stayer to 11th May; Landguard, 25th May; Arlington Resr (Sussex), 27th May; Eastbourne (Sussex), 2nd–7th June; Gillingham, 3rd June, then Higham (both Kent), 4th June; Martin's Haven (Pembrokeshire), 5th June; Upper Hollesley (Suffolk), 8th June; Flamborough Head, 9th June; Hastings (Sussex), 9th June; Severn Beach (Gloucestershire), 10th June.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* Fair Isle, 20th–22nd May with a second on 25th; Weybourne (Norfolk), 20th May; Isle of May, 30th May to 2nd June. Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* Tory Island, 29th May. Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* Gramborough Hill (Norfolk), 19th–20th May; Horsey (Norfolk), 22nd May. Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Flamborough, 19th–20th May. Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* Worthing (Sussex), 20th May; Capel-le-Ferne (Kent), 28th May. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* Scourie (Highland), 18th May; St Mary's, 19th–21st May.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* Skye (Highland), 20th May. Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* Filey (Yorkshire), 21st May; Sumburgh Head, 24th–25th May; Scousburgh (Shetland), 26th May; Farne Islands, 31st May to 1st June. Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* St Mary's, 19th May. Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* Bryher (Scilly), 28th May; Gloup, Yell, 29th May to 1st June.





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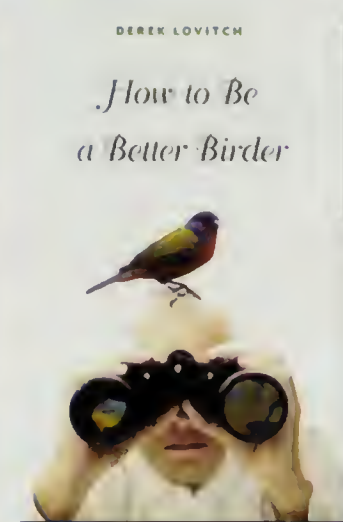
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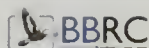


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